

TRANSHIMALAYAS UNFIELD

The record of a Journey in
Thibet, Tras-Himalayan India,
Chinese Turkestan, Russian
Turkestan and Persia.

DAVID FRASER

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P R E F A C E.

To write a book is perhaps easier than to find a title for it, and it is in despair of being able to think of anything better that I have called this volume 'THE MARCHES OF HINDUSTAN,' slender though its claim may be to so comprehensive a name. Still this title is fairly applicable, for the journey described includes the countries marching with that portion of our Indian Empire which presents frontiers conterminous with those of important states independent of British power. It is because my title suggests an exhaustive treatise on the relations between those countries and India, and because the book falls far short of that suggestion, that I feel impelled to offer apology to the reader.

It has been said that India is the head corner-stone of the fabric known as the British Empire; to put it another way—What would the British Empire be without India? What would be our position in the East if we lost India, and if it were gained by a rival? The more we contemplate the relationship between India and the rest of the Empire, the more it must be realised that our wealth and greatness in the world hinge upon the continued possession of this richest and

most populous portion of the Asiatic continent. Apparently we are quite secure in our possession ; but would we have been so if Russia had beaten Japan? What is the significance of the great movement that in these days is stirring the Oriental into rebellion against the domination of Europe? Has it any bearing upon our position in India ; will our occupation be as easy and simple to-morrow as it is to-day?

It is vital to our Empire to keep India. We can keep it if our people realise its importance, and are willing to make the effort. To this end it is necessary that the subject should be discussed and understood, not only by politicians and administrators, but by those who have the ultimate voice in the government of the State. It is into this discussion that I humbly venture to intrude an account of my journey in Central Asia. To the student of affairs my contribution will be of little value, for it is no more than the observations of a traveller who has endeavoured to describe what he has seen and understood of the countries and problems which have confronted him by the way.

I make no apology for inclusion of so much that is personal. A narrative is more likely to attract the interest of the general public than a long and unrelieved discussion of the series of problems involved. While relating my own peaceable adventures I have endeavoured to interpolate information regarding topography, history, economics, and strategics which, though stale to the student, may be new and instructive to the reader who has had neither time nor inclination systematically to make himself acquainted with Eastern affairs.

Owing to the wide extent of the regions discussed in the book it has not been found practicable specially to prepare a map in illustration. Mr Edward Stanford, however, has supplied an excellent map, brought well up to date, which admirably delineates the countries adjacent to India, and which should prove, except for differences in the spelling of names, an effective adjunct to the text.

I have to thank the Editors of 'The Times' and of 'Blackwood's Magazine' for permission to reproduce articles that have appeared in their respective columns, and particularly the Editor of the 'Times of India' for the free use of a series of letters which appeared in that paper under the heading of "The Diary of a Traveller."

DAVID FRASER.

CLEMENT'S INN, W.C.

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THE MARCHES OF HINDUSTAN.

THIBET.

CHAPTER I.

SIKHIM.

RAILWAY travelling in India can be as tiresome and uninteresting as in any part of the world; but there is one short journey to be made from Calcutta that, once performed, can never be forgotten. Those who have taken the night mail for Darjeeling will understand. Leaving Sealdah station late in the afternoon, one is whirled through the rich fields of Lower Bengal and, at dark, landed upon the banks of the mighty Ganges. From the dimly lit platform a string of naked coolies carries the baggage down a steep slope, across a wooden gangway, and then to the lower deck of the river steamer. Here there is a scramble for small silver coins and a retirement of the coolies. His goods deposited in safe keeping, the traveller climbs to the upper deck, a brilliantly illuminated expanse set with long dining-tables and alive with silent-footed, white-clad native servants. All around is a wall of darkness,

dotted here and there with spots of yellow, the dim lamps of passing craft. Over the rail the black water is slipping quickly but noiselessly under the thick beams of light cast upon its oily surface. The yellow spots pass mysteriously by in the distance, floating in a dark void that seems to extend beyond the vessel into infinity.

Then there comes a loud ringing of bells, a deep booming moan from the syren, and a groaning in the bowels of the boat. The great paddles churn up the water into boiling foam, the lights on the bank fall away, and the vessel is afloat upon the bosom of the Ganges. As we gather way the leadsmen take their places on either bow and call the depth in monotonous but musical tones. There is, besides, the regular beating of the engines, the intermittent plunging of the lead, and the continuous whisper of the water past the sides of the vessel as she pushes her way through the surrounding blackness. It seems desecration to eat in the midst of such enchantment, but he would be a poor traveller who failed to stimulate his powers of appreciation by food and the subsequent cigar.

Satisfied and sleepy, after an hour's voyage one lands upon the farther bank and soon finds rest upon the comfortable couches provided in the waiting train. There is a period of oblivion, and then the morning. From the windows there is still to be seen the same tree-skirted, richly green fields that adorned the neighbourhood of Calcutta. But there is something more if you put your head out of the window and look straight north. In the distance is a purple line of mountains rising sheer from the plain, and above it, hovering dim and ghostlike over these foothills, are the Snowy Mountains. If you do not know they are there, you think at first they are only clouds, but as you gaze they take shape and form, the peaks stand out, and the valleys

show like black crevasses. Perhaps if you are early enough, you will see the rising sun tint the whole range a delicate pink; wish, too, for the vulture's plumes that you might

“ . . . stretch for topmost Himalay,
Light where the rose-gleam lingers on those snows,
And strain the gaze with searching what is round ! ”

For three days I looked forth from the verandah of a tree-embowered bungalow and longed to know what there was behind the rampart of mountain that looked down upon us from the north. Three miles away Sunchonlu rose sheer out of the plain, towering up and up, until, at 7000 feet, its head was lost in the clouds. The bungalow floated in a dark-green sea composed of millions of little round tea-bushes, set in rows that gave the orderly and uniform impression of a ploughed field. Here and there were dotted the white buildings devoted to the manufacture of tea, each a small island guarded by a ring of trees. Some way off a cloud of gaily clad coolies were slowly passing through the tea, their chatter and laughter ebbing and flowing with every breath of wind. The sky was of that faint but unmistakable blue that accords with masses of fleecy white cloud. In the early morning the sun was bright and hot, yet delightful, for the surrounding green took all the fire out of its rays. Just to look forth was a satisfaction to the soul.

But contentment and mountains do not go well together. Abruptly the tea stops short, and gives way to the overhanging hills. The transition from level and peaceful plain to soaring and mysterious crag is startling, and almost takes the breath away. At one moment the mind sleeps under the influence of the sensuous surroundings, then wakes suddenly as the eye rapidly scales the distant heights and seeks

to penetrate the unknown beyond. For the imagination there is no stimulant like mountains.

Voyaging is victory, saith Richard Burton; and one cool morning in January I deemed myself a conqueror indeed, for was I not bound for the recesses of those hills whose soaring outlines captivated the eye, and whose dark ravines quickened the curiosity. It was a modest enough expedition. Only a few days' tour into Sikhim, a long gaze at the battlements of ice, then back to the fleshpots of the plains. But this brief debauch of the imagination was to have quite another ending. Instead of days in Sikhim, my little expedition was to last for months, and to extend, moreover, beyond the mountains and into that mysterious land that has been the goal of adventurous travellers since the days of Marco Polo. True, a ruthless expedition had partially torn the veil that had long hidden its secrets, but to read of what others have seen is only to stimulate the travel hunger.

The neighbourhood was that where the oft-described Teesta river debouches into the plains of India, hence Sikhim was due north, Nepal west, and Bhutan east. Not far away was a cleft in the mountains, and here the Leish river came tumbling down over rocks and boulders to find that the boisterous Teesta, which it meets in the plains, has become a reformed character, flowing calmly and decently southward to join the Ganges. Those peaceful waters had ceased to interest me, since in three days of fishing they had yielded up not a single mahseer. But I was eager to see the Leish in its earlier efforts, when with energy unabated it roars and hisses down its own narrow valley, full of the excitement and importance conferred by birth thousands of feet above sea-level.

Our party consisted of my brother Ernest and myself, and eight coolies to carry light camp equipment. The

coolies set out very early in the morning, but we could afford to be more leisurely, for there were horses to carry us for the first few miles. Cantering over the plain was like adjusting the focus of a telescope, for every moment brought us nearer to the hills, made clear details hitherto dim and uncertain, and caused magnification of the whole scene. Behind stretched the limitless green plains of Bengal, in front a chaos of mountain scenery without parallel in the world. Until actually there we could see no rift in the stupendous barrier that towered before us. The densely wooded slopes rose almost sheer out of the ground, giving an impression of precipitousness that was not dispelled until we had plunged into a narrow ravine and obtained a glimpse in profile.

The way lay along the bed of the Leish, and we soon had to discard the horses because of the roughness of the ground. The stony track crossed and recrossed the leaping torrent, sometimes clinging to the face of a bare rock that rose sheer above the stream, at other times proceeding by stepping-stones dotted precariously amid the swirling water. After two hours of tramping we overtook the coolies, who were resting at the foot of a steep hillside that had to be climbed. So far we had been rising very slowly, consultation of the aneroid showing an ascent of 1000 feet in four miles. But if we were to ravish the sights of the Himalayas we must toil in earnest. So we said farewell to the Leish, and bent our eyes upon the lofty tree-covered acclivity that towered above us and lost itself in the skies.

It needs a sound heart, good wind, and much faith to surmount a Himalayan slope. Would that there had been less flesh in the pots of the plains, was my constant wish as we groaned and sweated upwards. The coolies were not in training for such work—none but steeple-jacks would be. The ascent was nearly 60 degrees, and could be accomplished only by constant tacking

backward and forward. To occupy the mind and detract attention from the labour, I began counting steps. The aneroid said 750 feet for 1000 steps. After 2000 steps I imagined myself in eternity—not in that department which provides harps and golden streets, but the other, in which my task was climbing for ever, with a hundred-weight of lead on each foot, a feather bed over my mouth, and a boa-constrictor twined round my heart.

Nevertheless voyaging is victory, for the triumph of perceiving the gorge below one's feet gradually contract in size, and of beholding the expanding view, are joys to the heart which compensate for infinite labour. At one moment a beetling crag on the opposite mountain appals one by its precipitous grandeur. A thousand steps more and one looks across to realise that the towering rock below has stood out of the hillside to form a shelf upon which nestles a human habitation surrounded by patches of green cultivation. With the glasses one can see smoke ascending, a woman at the door, children playing, and folk working in the fields. And then between the shoulders of the hills to the south one catches a glimpse of the broad plains of India, the eye covering at a glance country that holds and feeds a million of people, perhaps five millions, for the horizon is far distant and the expanse as populous as any in Bengal.

When the aneroid says 4000 feet we are on the top of a ridge that separates two deep valleys, one holding the tumbling Leish and the other streaked by the foaming water of the Teesta. A couple of miles by a path which switch-backs up and down the serrated edge of the ridge and we strike a tiny forest bungalow—a curious return to the artificial after a feast upon things natural. Milk and eggs are here forthcoming, and these, with the creature comforts borne by the coolies, form a meal that can only be comprehended by those who toil incessantly for eight hours during the heat of the day.

But the morning dwarfs the sensations of the previous day. Clouds and mist had shrouded the surrounding hills as we marched along the ridge in the evening, prohibiting a view of the distant mountains. This morning the atmosphere was dazzlingly clear, and upon waking from well-earned sleep, through the open door of the bungalow our eyes unwittingly rested on a dim grey line on the northern horizon. From this nebulous appearance there suddenly shone several points of pure white, and we realised that the morning sun was rising upon the Snowy Mountains, to see which very sight people travel round the globe. Kinchinjunga, Pandim, Kubra, and the others of this unequalled range of peaks, lay before us, and we watched the pale colours come and go as the rays of the sun travelled slowly and imperceptibly down their snow- and glacier-covered slopes.

Eyes gluttoned with the perfection of massed rock, snow, and ice, we literally tumble over a precipice down into a deep green gorge below the little forest bungalow. Three thousand feet of a drop in less than a mile, and covered under the hour, shakes body and soul. At the bottom of the gulf knees are trembling and nerves are all to pieces. A partridge roused from the undergrowth goes off with a roar of wings, startling one as much as might an armed Cossack springing from an ambuscade. We had to wait an hour for the coolies, sitting meantime on a boulder in the bed of a leaping torrent. Just below three streams joined, forming a deep green pool surrounded by a fringe of boiling foam. On all sides towered dark-green forest, hiding mountains that ascended 5000 to 8000 feet, and shutting out all but a patch of blue sky. The hot sun lit up only one side of this cleft in the hills, leaving the others in deep shade. . . . thus to feast the senses who would not be willing to suffer some weariness of the flesh !

Then an hour's scramble in the bed of a river, after which one of those big green slopes is tackled again, bringing toil to the body and delight to the spirit as we gradually unfold the immense panorama of hill and valley, and realise the infinite variety and perfect harmony of nature's colouring. Nor is the way lacking in refreshment for the body. Here for the first time we encountered little parties of men and women bearing enormous baskets, from the woven sides of which there gleamed the yellow and gold of ripe fruit. Investigation proved them freshly plucked oranges, and the proffer of a two-anna piece resulted in four beauties coming into my possession. I thought I knew the taste of an orange, having eaten them everywhere between Sylhet and California, Bloemfontein and Damascus. But for ability to reach the innermost soul give me the orange of Sikhim, handed by a brown-eyed, copper-coloured Lepcha maid, and eaten on a hillside bathed in drops from your own perspiring brow.

Oranges galore, and longing intense to reach one stage nearer the Snowy Mountains, have their due consequence, and once more the aneroid reads 4000 feet, while Kalimpong, that quaintest of Himalayan townships, reflects the brilliant sunlight a few miles along the ridge. We spent a night in the hospitable home of Dr Graham, and in the morning inspect his crowds of happy barelegged urchins, male and female, who have been rescued from the slums of Calcutta, and from the degradation that overtakes the destitute whites and Eurasians of big Indian cities. We engage regular hill coolies at Kalimpong, and a skilled cook, who commits us to further stores, as the regions into which we are about to penetrate provide no food of any kind.

Now we plunge again into the depths of the valleys, this time into the gorge of the Teesta, upon whose banks we march for some miles along a fine road, specially

renovated to accommodate the traffic of the recent expedition into Thibet. One night in a dak bungalow, adjoined by telegraph and dak offices, and then we leave the road to pursue its well-ordered way to Gantol while we enter the genuine, wild, uncivilised Sikkim, where paths climb ladders, cross rivers by bamboo bridges, descend and ascend 3000 feet to cross a valley half a mile wide, and generally proceed along the line of most resistance. Our tent now becomes a necessity, and haggling for eggs, milk, and chickens a daily pleasure. Oranges have become an essential of existence. From four for two annas their price has dwindled to sixteen for an anna, bought on the road, and thirty-two for an anna if taken under the trees upon which they grow. Whenever we come to one of the rich golden groves that every now and then flare out upon the olive hillsides, we call a halt of our train and order four-annas' worth of fruit, to be eaten on the spot. In the heat of the day the coolies have discarded all superfluous clothing, and the effect of the oranges upon them reminds one of the appearance of the pizen pup of fable. But ups and downs of thousands of feet speedily rectify errors in the figure, and an hour after eating the oranges they looked as attenuated as ever.

The Teesta Valley is a favourite haunt of the famous Himalayan butterfly. In winter comparatively few are to be seen, and these of limited variety. Sixty years ago Hooker penned the following lines, which for descriptive power and artistic appreciation are likely to remain unrivalled. Writing of the Teesta Valley in his 'Himalayan Journals,' he says: "But by far the most striking feature consisted in the amazing quantity of superb butterflies, large tropical swallow-tails, black, with scarlet or yellow eyes on their wings. They were seen everywhere, sailing majestically through the still hot air, or fluttering from one scorching rock to another, and

especially loving to settle on the damp sand of the river edge; where they sat by thousands, with erect wings, balancing themselves with a rocking motion, as their heavy sails inclined them to one side or the other, resembling a crowded fleet of yachts on a calm day."

Not the least attractive feature of travelling in Sikhim is the variety of people one encounters. Their dress, ornaments, and physiognomy differ widely, suggesting divergence in race and temperament unexpected in a country of such limited extent. The aborigines of Sikhim are Lepchas; but these are now in a minority, owing to the influx of Nepalese, Bhutanese, Thibetans, and natives of India. These again are divided into numerous tribes, castes, and sects, each one of which dresses distinctively, and frequently possesses a distinct type of countenance and a separate language. Amongst my coolies were men who knew Hindustani, Lepcha, and two other dialects. But as we travelled north into Sikhim we often came to hamlets where not one of them could open communication with the inhabitants. Anybody who could speak Hindustani I hailed as a friend and brother, indeed as a civilised person who knew the same world that I knew. But such were few and far between.

Anything so rough and wild as the tracks in some parts of Sikhim we had never before encountered. Ponies or animal transport, of course, were quite out of the question, only carriers with hands to help them over difficulties being possible. Cane erections, less safe than the Bridge of Sighs, are the usual means of crossing rivers, while bamboo ladders, built to all appearances in some year B.C., the only way to surmount the precipices that frequently barred the way. Over rocks the most astoundingly primitive contrivances assist the path, a notched bamboo leaning against fifteen feet of cliff, a fallen tree blazed along its length to bridge a landslip, and so forth,—

excellent devices for people who never wear boots, but very puzzling to soles with steel bits or iron nails. Indeed for mountaineering pure and simple, for positive danger and abundant excitement, I commend the reader to an unfrequented hill-track in Sikkim.

In such country the endeavour to make a short cut is likely to lead to consequences. We formed an ambition to cross a particular mountain-range by a road which did not appear on the map, but the topographical situation seemed so clear that we decided to venture. The coolies were gradually enticed away from human habitation and then faced with the alternative of starving on the mountain slope or climbing according to our wish. Protest was loud, of course; but the Sahib is notoriously an incorrigible brute with whom there is no arguing, and besides he has watches and compasses and other damnable contrivances in little boxes that keep the devils and demons of death and destruction at bay. And there would be buksheesh at the end. So we started up a narrow track into the jungle. There was just enough semblance of a path to guide our footsteps. After 3000 feet of climb, and the exhaustion of daylight and the strength of the coolies, it was clear enough that we were lost, and that as we were going it was next door to impossible to cross the mountain ahead. So we camped before an enormous bonfire and waited for the morning.

Daylight revealed our position on the glaxis of a great mountain, but failed entirely to show a way through the jungle to any of the villages we could see in the far distance. Our height was about 4000 feet, so we were tantalised with a handsome view of the surroundings. But while arguing as to a plan of campaign a charcoal-burner, who had seen our bonfire of the night before, came along to investigate the mystery. This brave pioneer was hired as a guide, and he, to our delight, volunteered to lead us over our mountain-range. And

he did. On hands and knees we climbed 4200 feet, over landslips, mountain torrents, fallen trees, and at last reached a path which crossed the Mafi La, 8200 feet by the aneroid. Such a grind is seldom vouchsafed to mere man, but I would not have missed a thorn scratch or a rock bruise, though my body was an emporium of both, gained on that delightful lost day. During it we touched snow for the first time, and in the pass felt the brain compression consequent on high altitude, a slight headache that soon wore off on descending the opposite side. And we had a magnificent view at comparatively close quarters of the immense expanses of snow and glacier that clothe Kinchinjunga and his brethren from head to foot. The Mafi La was our turning-point, for from here we swung south, with the intention of returning to India. But at Gantok circumstances fell so that we were able to extend our journey into Thibet.

CHAPTER II.

ENTERING THIBET.

GANTOK is by no means a city within the accepted meaning of the word, though it is the capital of a country boasting an independent ruler. Whether "Independent Sikkim," as it is styled in the books of the Government of India, is really ruled by the Rajah or by the British Resident, is a matter that does not concern the aspirant to honours as a Thibetan traveller. All we cared was that nobody expressed the intention of arresting us on account of our declared proposal to cross the Nathu La into Chumbi. This is no such simple matter, judged by the letter of a Government official at Darjeeling, who threatened me with "criminal prosecution" for entering Sikkim without leave, but graciously assured me of official protection on payment of two rupees. Gantok contains the palace of the Rajah, the home of the Resident, the barracks of a company of British native infantry, and a few shops where you may buy grain, oranges, potatoes, and a few horrors in the shape of aged tinned goods.

The few houses necessary to such a community are perched on the tail of a mountain spur that stands over 6000 feet above sea-level, and pokes its nose into a sea of broken country consisting of valleys 5000 feet down below, and hills 8000 feet above. Such a view as Gantok commands entitles it to be considered the most grandly

situated capital of any country in the world. Behind Gantok, in addition to the lovely vista of deep green valley and forest-clad mountain, there floats in the heavens the vision of eternal snow, sometimes a whirling mass of vapour, at other times a dim succession of ghosts upon the distant horizon, and anon a dazzling, blinding collection of pure white pinnacles and pyramids.

Gantok's greatest claim to notice in these present times is that it is the threshold of the entrance to Thibet. Here are based the detachments of soldiers stationed at Chumbi, Phari, and Gyantse. Our Political Officer at Chumbi and the Trade Agent at Gyantse are both directly subordinate to the Political Officer of Sikhim, who, as already mentioned, dwells at Gantok. At Gantok a Government servant Thibetward bound, civil or military, must provide himself with new and ponderous clothes or die of shivers crossing the Pass, or of pneumonia when arrived in Thibet. And at Gantok the merest layman must do likewise, or suffer one or other of the aforesaid penalties. One poor gentleman ignored Gantok's claims to the sartorial re-equipment of persons crossing the boundary-line. He was an American savant whom our Government permitted to enter Thibet on scientific intent. But he would have none of the lamb's-wool undershirts or quilted pyjamas, and so his bones to-day lie in Gyantse.

This is what they served out to us, and what we took with the utmost gratitude: Gilgit boots—like thigh-high fishing-boots made of felt—fur poshteen, fur-lined gloves, padded pyjamas, thick woollen undershirt and pants, an enormous quilted resai weighing a stone, Balaclava cap, &c. I understand that when the troops crossed the Jelap La, they wore all these things. By special dispensation we avoided that error and employed several coolies to carry them, with the result that we escaped dissolution at the very beginning of our journey. Fearful tales were

told us in Gantok of the hardships of crossing the dreaded pass into Chumbi, especially in the month of January, when the cold was greatest and the snowdrifts deepest. With alarm we read the harrowing accounts of correspondents who had accompanied the expedition to Thibet two years before. Worst of all was the dreaded mountain sickness, which was calculated to abstract a man's senses, along with the contents of his stomach, and generally to render him a raving lunatic, possibly for life.

We left Gantok with heavy hearts, and the assurance of encountering snow within three miles. But we completed the first day's stage without finding snow, and the second with a similar result, the only thing suggestive of cold being a frozen lake at 12,000 feet. The second night was distinctly chilly, but in the morning the sun was bright and hot, and during the third day we crossed the dreaded Nathu La in our shirt-sleeves and in the same kit we had worn when leaving the plains. There was no snow, and up to the top of the pass not a breath of wind. Nor were we sick or headachy. Then I scoffed at all I had read and heard—and suffered the usual fate of scoffers. Prancing down the reverse slope I was struck suddenly by a blast that made me doubt the stability of the features of my face, and forced me to don coat and waistcoat with indecent haste. Next I was taken in the loins and temples with feelings which God forbid that my worst enemy may ever suffer. I found myself reeling about in a manner that would have done credit to a bank-holiday roysterer. As the beginning of the descent from the pass is very steep, and consists of a zigzag track carved out of a precipitous decline, I began to fear falling over the edge and reaching the bottom of the ravine at a speed inconsistent with dignity and safety. Accordingly I lay down on the path, and went into a sort of trance, during which I was unable to move hand

or foot. As the track was only three or four feet broad, my legs strayed completely across it, and I was in such a condition of helplessness that I continued to lie still while a string of pack-horses came along and stepped gingerly, one after the other, over my prostrate body. It was half an hour before I recovered sufficiently to resume walking, and it was with great thankfulness I soon afterwards reached a rest bungalow and lay down to ease a terrible headache, the result of blood-pressure on the brain consequent on the rarefied atmosphere. In the middle of my own trouble I had forgotten all about my brother. He walked behind me for some time thinking how stupid it was to see a man losing control of himself for, apparently, no reason at all. But his criticism was soon silenced by a severe attack of the same complaint, and altogether he did his full share of penance. If a London policeman had come along at the time we would most assuredly have been arrested as drunk and incapable.

Next day we tramped gaily into Chumbi none the worse for having evened Mont Blanc, and not at all conscious of continuing existence at a height of 12,000 feet. Nevertheless, having accomplished the feat of walking over the Nathu La, we were to be content thereafter to ride horses, and to save our wind for more serious purposes than mere locomotion.

At Chumbi we were hospitably entertained by the Political Officer, Captain Campbell, who took us to visit all the sights in the neighbourhood, including the Chinese wall at Yatong, and other places connected with the advent of the Younghusband Mission. We were also accorded the privilege of making the acquaintance of Miss Annie Taylor, the missionary lady so long resident on the borders of Thibet, and whose gallant endeavours to reach Lhasa have excited admiration. Nor must I forget the visit to the Chinese officials at Phema and their

cordiality when I produced my card in Chinese characters, and conveyed to them the information that I had been in China lately, and knew by chance the birthplace of one of my hosts. Surely there is no nationality with such frank and friendly manners as the Chinese. Their ability to be disagreeable is particularly well known in these days, but what is admirable in the Chinaman is that his manners always express his true sentiments. If he dislikes you and your people, the feeling is undisguised in his behaviour. But if he is friendly at heart, then his cordiality is both charming and affecting. That at least has been my experience of the Chinese, gained in intimate relations with them during the last three years.

Chumbi to Phari, 14,300 feet, has been amply described by those writers of books who gained their opportunity through the Expedition. It remains for me to say that whatever has been written in detestation of Phari is abundantly true, and in no wise exaggerated. The uncleanness of the people perhaps has been dwelt upon rather noticeably, but a temperature in the morning of $9\frac{1}{2}$ degrees below zero speedily developed my sympathy with Thibetans who disincline to water. In fact, my sympathy on the second day at Phari led me into emulation of their leading sin of omission. Perhaps we were prejudiced against Phari, but not without reason. We lived in the ruined jong for a week, during which time we never once ceased shivering. From Phari we climbed 2000 feet after a herd of burhel, that when we started were peaceably feeding—to find them gone. Another day we climbed a hill 18,000 feet high, and nearly died of the experience.

In Phari there is only one good thing—Chumolari Mountain. Bride of Kinchinjunga the name implies, and anything more beautiful or more stately could hardly be conceived. One catches the first glimpse of her snow-covered white-rocked top when passing through a gorge

leading from the Chumbi Valley. From Hooker's exquisite description one recognises it at once, and is struck dumb with admiration. Bare hillsides and dark forbidding rock surround one when laboriously rising to the Phari Valley. The wind sweeps down the ravines, rendering vegetation abortive and trees impossible. Nothing but desolation appears in front, until one suddenly turns a corner to find the wedge of blue sky in the scene ahead filled by a wondrous shimmering cone pointing heavenward, like a great diamond set between the shoulders of the hills. Chumolari is moderate in height compared with the peaks in the great range forming the northern boundary of Sikhim. But 23,930 feet is no mean height, and dwarfs most mountains not of the Himalayas. Chumolari is the apex of a great snow-covered range that forms the boundary between Bhutan and Thibet, culminating in the less distinctive but loftier Kulakangri, 24,740 feet, a hundred miles farther east. Seen from Darjeeling or any part of Sikhim, only Chumolari of this range is visible, her mighty slopes and elegant conical head completely blocking out the series of peaks in line behind.

Phari, when we arrived, was preparing to receive the Tashi Lama on his little expected return from the Indian tour. All had been weeping and wailing when he passed south; now the people were smiling and happy to know that he was already in Thibet, and soon to give them a blessing as he returned homeward to Shigatse. They had deemed their spiritual head doomed when he ventured across his own border, and themselves lost sinners since their protection against the powers of darkness had been inveigled into a far country. But with anxiety now relieved they gaily prepared to welcome him back, building innumerable little altars on the road, and marking off with stones space in which his sacred equipage might safely travel.

On arrival of the Lama we met Lieutenant Bailey, the acting Trade Agent at Gyantse, and Captain Steen, medical officer to the Agency, who were accompanying the Lama to his home. With them were Captain Fitzgerald of the 18th Bengal Lancers, and A.D.C. to Lord Kitchener. A telegram to the Foreign Office at Calcutta requesting permission to accompany this party was replied to in the affirmative, and it was with much joy and thankfulness that I prepared to extend my journey. Unfortunately my brother was compelled to return to India, but he had had such a taste of the cold and other discomforts that perhaps he was not altogether sorry.

Before leaving Phari we enjoyed an amusing and delightful exhibition of Thibetan temper. There was a quarrel among the transport drivers of Chumbi and Phari, in which the headman of the latter was maltreated. There ensued a declaration of war between the two parties, and hostilities commenced without delay and amidst great uproar, chiefly contributed by the women. The weapons employed were stones, rocks, bricks, mud, and abuse, all of which darkened the air until a squad of the 3rd Brahmans with fixed bayonets appeared on the scene. The young sepoy had never seen service, and so fell in with great excitement, doubtless anticipating scalps and loot. But since 1904 Thibetans have learned discretion, and at sight of cold steel the riot subsided.

From Phari we went north across the Tang La, 15,200 feet, and in due time arrived at the Tuna plain, of which members of the Expedition must cherish melancholy recollection. Flat as a billiard-table and swept by wind, it is the barest and most inhospitable region on earth. Yet it was full of life, teeming with wild ass and gazelle, and furnishing abundant nourishment to numerous herds of yaks that diligently cropped the scanty but rich grass. Here we saw a wolf sneaking after gazelle. Farther on

we put up a big red fox with a tail as bushy as a lady's muff. Here and there we came upon colonies of quaint little marmots, who made frantic dashes for their holes, and when in these safe refuges turned round and winked at us. Great friends with the marmots were innumerable sparrows, which flitted about as cheekily and happily as they do on London housetops. We noticed that the sparrows went in and out of the marmots' holes, and the Thibetans told us they actually lived together—on platonic terms, let us hope.

Life at an elevation of 15,000 feet during the dead of winter is not without drawbacks. It means a temperature during the night of never less than zero. Once the thermometer said 13 degrees below, and it felt like 113. On the road to Gyantse the Indian Government has caused to be erected a series of rest-houses for the shelter of officers and troops passing to and fro. Unluckily for us the buildings were not complete, doors and windows being lacking, while roofs in places admitted of astronomical observation. But these are minor matters compared to the provision for heating. During the absence of the Trade Agent with the Tashi Lama in India the intelligent Thibetan had been ordered to push on with the construction of the houses, and particularly the fireplaces. He had carried out his orders with despatch, and with a disregard of plans that entitles him to a hereafter in boiling oil. For instead of room for a blazing fire he had built a heavy masonry wall, in the middle of which was left a slit less than the breadth of the sole of an ordinary shooting-boot, and a yard in height. At a fire in this erection four icy travellers tried to warm their feet, three boots, one above the other, at a time. When three feet were thawed it was usually discovered that the stoppage of draught had put the fire out. Before the remaining five were warmed it was long past bed-time. In these

circumstances I regarded it as a special indication of Divine favour that my kit contained a rubber hot-water bottle. The other three viewed this feminine possession with much disfavour, freely predicting that its use would result in cramp, gout, ossification of the bones, and a general decay of the faculties. But when the present contains good, the hardy traveller is content to risk evil in the future, and the *naram garam bottli* continued throughout our journey to be my dearest friend and greatest comforter.

Doubtless it strikes the reader that the existence of fuel at a height of 15,000 feet is contrary to the laws of nature. But up here red-tape has not interfered with the arrangements of Providence, *vide* the eccentricity of gravity and the variability of the boiling-point. On these higher levels of Thibet people don't burn wood or coal, for the same reason that they don't skate in Bengal. Instead they use argol, a Mongolian word signifying yak dung. This substance occupies a very important place in the domestic economy of a Thibetan household, for without it they could not cook their food; while any stoppage in the supply would sound the death-knell of the herds of yak which represent food, clothing, and transport to nine-tenths of the population. Argol makes an excellent fire, red-hot at its climax, but desperately smoky in the initial stages. The Thibetan is used to the smoke, and breathes it as appreciatively as a cobbler takes snuff. But the European, before admitting to his room or tent the earthenware vessel or perforated bucket in which a fire is usually made, must allow it to stand in the wind until glowing, when all smoke ceases and considerable warmth is radiated.

The currency system in Thibet is greatly simplified by the fact that several of the commonest commodities are accepted as legal tender for the settlement of accounts. Brick tea of standard qualities has a well-recognised

value, as has the frozen carcass of a sheep, a skinful of rancid butter, a roll of smelly cloth, and a few other things. Prominent among these is argol, which, in sacks weighing about a maund, is worth the equivalent of twenty shillings per ton. A countryman paying rent to his monastic proprietors thus comes laden with a collection of odorifics which in more sophisticated regions would procure him a month in jail. The value of argol has given rise to a very important point in Thibetan etiquette. When travelling nobody carries fuel, but counts on being able to pick it up on the camping-ground at the next stage, where to take what might be found without leaving provision for the next comer would be considered a great breach of good manners.

The Tuna plain tests patience and temper for nearly two days, and then the traveller experiences a change of country. From journeying in the open we are forced into the surrounding hills by the presence of the Bham Tso, a broad lake frozen in winter, and, I think, salt. Where the plain merges into the lake the ground is one immense swamp, hard at present, but an impassable bog in summer. Here we encountered duck for the first time, and Bailey bagged a couple of fat mallard. Gazelle so far had been very hard to shoot, and we had not bothered about them. They generally took alarm at 250 yards, and scampered far out of range. One lot of ten bolted while I was stalking them, and galloped in single file across my flank. After two days of vain endeavour to get a shot I was reduced to the unsportsmanlike resort of browning the herd. Putting the sight of the rifle up to 500 yards, I aimed at the leader and fired. The fourth in the line fell out and lay down. So far as I had been able to judge they were all bucks, but my reward for violating unwritten law was an unhappy little doe. She proved, however, very sweet in the eating.

Beyond Bham Tso lies another lake called Kala Tso,

the two being connected by a narrow stream in which we found duck. As we rode along the gorge we were greatly excited to observe *Ovis ammon* on a crest some 2000 feet up. We tossed for the chance, and Fitzgerald and Steen were soon wending their way up the mountain-side eager to get a shot at this rare and timid sheep, whose head is one of the most coveted trophies obtainable in the wild countries north of the Himalayas. They travelled some enormous distance round a peak, and on arrival at the ground found the brutes gone. In this part of the world the experience of sportsmen had been that *ammon* will go forty miles after scenting danger, though afterwards we had reason to modify this opinion. Meanwhile Bailey and myself had good sport with hare, duck, and snow-pigeon.

Out of the Kala Tso flows the Nyang Chu, the stream which waters the Gyantse Valley and enters the Tsangpo, or Brahmaputra, at Shigatse. Along its banks we had tremendous sport with our guns, bagging duck of several varieties, woodcock, teal, hare, and partridges in great number. We also saw a herd of burhel, but could not get within range. The river mostly flowed in a defile commanded by the road high up on the hillside. From the road we examined the river with glasses, and found duck at nearly every bend. One of us, by turns, directed the other three from the road, one walking up the duck while one up and another down stream shot the birds that escaped the first man. Arriving early one afternoon at a village, Fitzgerald and myself went out after tea to prospect. A local sport led us along a rocky ridge with great *impressement*, and sure enough, in a field below, we spotted a covey of partridges roosting for the night. On being walked up, they raced into an adjacent patch of cover, along which we drove them. At the tail of the cover they rose, and we got five with the four barrels. The remainder flew up the hillside, and after a severe

scramble we found them again and followed until they rose, bagging two or three. They now returned to their original cover, and we repeated the operation as before, continuing until we bagged the whole of the covey, thirteen in number. Meanwhile the villagers had been attracted by the firing, and crowded round, fighting for possession of the empty cartridges, and greatly encumbering our movements. How none were shot I cannot imagine, for they delighted in roving about in front of the guns, and in popping up unexpectedly when we were about to shoot.

In camp one night Bailey took me to the Lama's tent, and I had the honour of being introduced to his Holiness, which I understand is the equivalent of his title in Thibet. After our primitive quarters the warm and luxurious Mongolian *akoi* was delightful, its richly embroidered hangings and silken cushions suggesting the pavilions of the Arabian Nights. The frame-work consists of walls and dome of lattice work, over which are spread several layers of cloth, and over all a cover of leopard skins. Inside, the woodwork is concealed by the hangings, which blaze with Oriental colour, and by the pictures woven in silk and satin that are so prominent a feature of Buddhist ornamentation. The tent, I was told, was presented to the Lama by a Mongolian prince.

The manners of the Lama are of that gentle and kindly variety which one associates with ecclesiastical dignitaries. He appears to be entirely devoid of personal conceit, and to be unconscious of the exalted place he occupies in the eyes of Buddhists all the world over. Quite simply he said he was glad to know that I had joined his party, and hoped the hardships of the road would not be too great for me. He was very interested to know that I had seen something of the Russo-Japanese war, about which he made many inquiries. Bailey and he are exactly of an age, in consequence of which they are great friends, Bailey's knowledge of the Thibetan

language greatly contributing to this desirable result. The tastes of the Lama run markedly in favour of photographs and, strangely enough for such a champion of peace, guns. Of these he was bringing several different kinds from Calcutta, and is never tired of being instructed in their mechanism. One interesting discovery I made. We were comparing the temperature of India with that of Thibet, and remarking upon the necessity for plenty of clothes in the latter. I asked the Lama if he ever felt the cold. He laughed, and for reply turned up his petticoats and displayed a bifurcated garment—lined with ermine. Explorers bound for the Pole, and others concerned in fashionable intelligence, should note.

After a week of travel we reached Gyantse, where a tremendous concourse of the faithful awaited the Lama, including the detachment of the 3rd Brahmins stationed here for the protection of the Trade Agent. Fitzgerald and myself were greatly interested in the surroundings, which bore many traces of the siege sustained by the Expedition prior to its reinforcement and advance to Lhasa. The present little garrison makes heroic efforts to grow vegetables, and to put a very awkward place in a proper state of defence.

The jong which commands the quarters of the Agency is situated something like Edinburgh Castle. The buildings crown a lofty rock, and the citadel is approached along a spur in rear, which enables communication to be maintained with the town behind. After the capture of the jong it was dismantled so far as such a mass of masonry can be destroyed, and now presents rather a melancholy appearance despite efforts at restoration. It is curious to find this enormous building uninhabited, with the exception of a small gompā, where two or three lamas serve diligently. These good men received us in the most kindly manner, showed all their treasures, and

took us into their private quarters, which were as simple and decent as one might imagine were those of a monk of the Middle Ages, and probably as clean. They rejoiced in the present of a rupee which, I would fain believe, they will spend in the service of their temple. From the walls of the jong we looked down upon a rectangular enclosure dignified by the title of "shooting-range." Here was a target which allowed practice at a hundred yards distance and no more. After hostilities ceased the Thibetans woke up to the necessity for some degree of military reform, and the local Arnold Forster set about the work with characteristic energy, causing beautiful repairs to be made to the wholly unnecessary walls of the range. It is not recorded that he provided soldiers. Curious it is that the Asiatic conception of military measures should be confined to the provision of fortification and equipment, and should take little note of the prime factor in warlike preparation—efficiency in the *personnel*. From Persia to China the same weakness is exhibited, prompting the reflection that Europe will have cause to rue the day it dawns upon the patient and enduring Oriental wherein lies the main reason of his inability to cope with the Occident.

Gyantse town is small beer, half the population consisting of lamas, who though important in Thibet, come low in the human scale. Of the remainder a few are merchants, but the great majority are people who make a living by the transportation of goods by yak, mule, or pony. In a village near the town is a manufactory of carpets. These are of fine quality, all pure wool, and occasionally the colour and pattern partake of the richness and grace of the East. But art, never very highly developed, is decadent in Thibet, and the increase in the demand occasioned by the purchases of officers who have visited the country within the last three years has caused

a corresponding drop in quality. The carpets are really no more than mats, the biggest I saw measuring about six feet by three. Owing, however, to the fact that no stock is kept, and that only a very few were available for my inspection, it is possible that I did not see their best work, and that the makers are capable of better things.

The transition from the Tuna plain and corresponding levels to the comparatively low-lying Gyantse Valley is particularly interesting. For the first-mentioned region is of the bleak and barren plateau which explorers have taught us to associate with Thibet, and which Expeditional writers have described in accents of holy terror. But the other is a new world, difficult to recognise from what has been written about Thibet. Tuna is nearly 15,000 feet above the sea, and is overlooked by the eternal snows of the Chumolari range in the east, and by the main range of the Himalayas in the west. From these frosty heights a bitter wind sweeps across the plain, and under the shadow of the chilly mountains trees cannot live nor vegetation thrive. Between Gyantse and Tuna there is a range of hills which checks the wind from the snow, while a drop of 2500 feet further contributes to a difference in temperature. Thus the valley of Gyantse awaits the traveller like an oasis in the desert. Here are trees and crops and white farmhouses surrounded by rich-soiled fields. In January agriculture is practically at a standstill, but in summer the trees are a mass of foliage and the surrounding hills green with verdure. A pleasant river meanders across the plain, and hundreds of irrigation canals streak the growing corn. In all the wide valley no inch of ground is left uncultivated. Were all Thibet like this, it must have been British or Russian long ago.

The Lama halted a day at Gyantse to bless the wicked and receive the gifts that are his due. Then we wheeled

west and rode straight to Shigatse, along the valley of the Nyang Chu. On the first day out we came to a big spinney full of hare. Forming a long line, in which our following delightedly joined, we beat the cover for two hours, and bagged a dozen. Skirting the river somebody got a brace of ducks, then somebody else took a long shot at a fox, and we all missed a horrified owl out of sheer astonishment at the expression in its eyes. Later in the day we spied a flock of geese on a water-logged field. The position was unstalkable, and so we pretended we were farmers going to our work. By this cunning device we got within shot, and as they rose gabbling we gave them all eight barrels. Unluckily we were using too small a size of shot, and so secured only seven. But, following, we got several more, and Steen brought down a couple of crane right and left. The latter, for eating, need to be kept for some time, when they make steak that cannot be told from Smithfield. For soup they are admirable. They are very shy birds, and cannot be stalked with a gun, as they rise at a hundred yards. But in flight they think themselves safe, and it is then that they give the sportsman his chance. Before reaching camp we shot more ducks, some woodcock, and made desolate a flock of snow-pigeons, ending up the day with a bag that for variety and numbers would be difficult to beat in unpreserved country.

Throughout the journey to Shigatse we had abundance of sport among small game. The valley is very flat, frequently swampy, and intersected with irrigation canals, which make moving about difficult. In summer it must be a perfect paradise for snipe and duck, while geese are present in thousands. From an agricultural point of view this valley must be very rich owing to the distribution of the water and the quality of the soil. Judging by the handsome farm-

houses, the people are well off, though I understand the ground is owned by Tashilumpo monastery. After four days of sport much like that just described we reached Shigatse. Our entry was conducted with great state and involved much interesting ceremony, the description of which deserves a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER III.

THE HOME-COMING OF THE TASHI LAMA.

WHEN Government invited the Lama to visit India the dove-cotes of Tashilumpo were greatly flustered. No Thibetan of his position had ever been known to leave the country, and such a violation of precedent as the acceptance of the invitation entailed, struck deep at the roots of the Thibetan policy of isolation. But several causes led to serious consideration of the step.

To begin with, there were the friendly relations which have existed between the Indian Government and Shigatse since the missions of Bogle and Turner in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Thereafter our native surveyors engaged in the exploration of Thibet were invariably treated with kindness and courtesy by the lamas of Tashilumpo. In 1865, the mediation of the Tashi Lama effected the conclusion of a mutually satisfactory peace between ourselves and the Bhutanese. And finally, at Khamba Jong, in the summer of 1903, our relations with the Shigatse people were very friendly, and probably would have resulted in the settlement of all outstanding questions had not Lhasa taken up an obstructive attitude.

These things disposed the Lama to take advantage of the opportunity to visit the country to which his faith owed its origin, and his advisers pressed for acceptance of the invitation to India, particularly those who

had come into personal touch with Indian officials and were broad-minded enough to perceive the benefits which might accrue from closer relations with the Government of India. But others, who might be termed ultra-clerical, perceived in a visit to India a loosening of the bonds by which the country is held in thrall by the monasteries. A visit to a country in the forefront of civilisation could have no other effect than that of broadening the minds of everybody who went there, and of awakening them to the unreasonableness and unprofitableness of the lamaic system of government. These Little Thibetans hated the idea of any of their countrymen realising that there were greater things in the world than the power and influence of the monasteries in which they themselves were supreme, and they opposed the visit of the Lama to India with the greatest vehemence. To further their views they took the people into their confidence, and prognosticated forcible detention, slow decline, and sudden death for their adored Lama. They painted the British character in colours too horrible for reproduction in print, and generally predicted a diversion of Divine favour which would end in eternal damnation for the inhabitants of Shigatse.

But stronger influences were at work, and it was decided that the Lama, with the monster entourage inseparable from Oriental travel, should grasp the hand of friendship held out to him by the Indian Government. Local gossip has it that the Council had sat continuously for three days and three nights discussing the matter, arguments for and against being fiercely reiterated until their exponents sank exhausted to the floor, barely able to swallow their ninety and ninth cup of greasy tea. When nobody was left with voice enough to speak, one elderly officer of the Household arose and said that he knew all about the Sahibs—hadn't he drunk wine with them at Khamba Jong until purple in the face—and that

what they wanted would have to be done. If the Burra Lat at Calcutta said the Lama was to go there, then the Lama must go, and there was no use talking any more about it. Then he sat down. Nobody had anything to say to such an unanswerable argument, and so the matter ended. Whilst there may be more picturesqueness than accuracy about this version of the proceedings, there is still some truth in it. The advisability of inviting the Lama to visit India was, I understand, first suggested by Captain O'Connor, the Trade Agent at Gyantse. That hard-headed and enthusiastic officer conveyed the invitation in person, and there can be no doubt that it was greatly owing to his energetic advocacy that the Lama's advisers were prevailed upon to agree.

Nevertheless to the great bulk of the lamas, and to all the people in Shigatse and the surrounding country, the departure of their spiritual ruler was looked upon as an unmitigated calamity. The scene as he rode out of the town is said to have been most affecting, thousands of weeping men, women, and children running after his chair for miles, hoping for a last glimpse of him, possibly for a chance to touch something belonging to him. These good folk never thought to see him come back, and doubtless many of his followers had their misgivings. It has been a tradition of the Tashi Lamas that their personalities shall be acceptable and beloved of the people, and the accounts we have of them all bear out the belief that they lived gentle and virtuous lives which endeared them to their adherents. There is thus in the doings at Tashilumpo a human element which cannot but appeal to the Westerner, and which must dispose us to take a sympathetic interest in the affairs of these simple people.

Until within a day's march of Shigatse our small party of Europeans had travelled as we pleased, varying the monotony of the way by shooting and hill-climbing, and arriving in camp at our convenience.

But the Lama expressed the wish that we should join in an official entry into Shigatse, and the places assigned to us in the procession indicated that he desired publicly to proclaim the friendship he felt for British subjects, and the honour he considered due to official British representatives.

To rise at 3 A.M. of the clock, in Cimmerian darkness and at a temperature of 3 degrees below zero, is a high price to pay for a place in a procession. But it is not an everyday privilege to escort to his home, after three months' absence, the holiest personage in Thibet. After a fortnight's marching with the Tashi Lama we had reached the last stage on the road to Shigatse, and hereafter we must journey in state and prove to the faithful that our sacredness is not diminished nor our dignity decreased because of travel in far Hindustan.

Having taken the places assigned to us by the Master of the Horse, we waited for the Lama. Soon there came a rush of dark figures from the enclosure that surrounded his tent, followed by a creaking of wooden staves and the coughing of men that undertake a burden. The Lama was chaired, and the chair was in motion. Hastily we scrambled up on our little horses, some scrambling too far and having to be helped back from the other side. Stars, millions of miles away, give barely sufficient light for mounting a horse when the rider is clad in Thibetan clothes and the saddle is of China, high and narrow in the seat. We rode in the midst of heavily muffled figures, whose identity in the darkness it was impossible to distinguish. Nor are Thibetans given to the exchange of courtesies with 35 degrees of frost in the air. It was chilly work waiting for the sun, but he came at last, not yet visible because of the mountains in the east, only spreading a grey light over the dull yellow plain and the towering rocks that flanked one side of the track. It was colder than ever in this morning

dimness, and, with mouth and eyes covered, we allowed ourselves to be carried forward, merely human bundles, conscious only of the perishing air.

Then from a state of torpor one suddenly waked to find the glare of the sun blazing on a line of gorgeous figures that streamed ahead. All the colour and fancy of the Orient were displayed in the *cortége* of which we formed a part. For the moment it was hard to believe we were riding in Arctic cold, and not on the burning plains of India. Bobbing up in front were golden emblems mounted on long poles. A garish flag came next, and then the gilt and yellow chair of the Lama, followed by an immense umbrella of rose silk. The muffled figures among which we rode were clad in all the colours of the rainbow, and the saddlery of the horses dazzled the eyes. Ahead, to keep the road, were the swashbucklers, ready to belabour the slow and curse the innocent. Next came the personal attendants of the Lama, arrayed in shining garments and invested with unspeakable dignity, these mounted on long-tailed, short-legged little horses that fussed and tramped along at four miles an hour. After an interval came the Lama himself, in a chair that one might reasonably suppose was a progenitor of the Lord Mayor's coach. It was borne by twelve struggling coolies in archaic uniform, who panted and sweated like the crew of a 'Varsity boat. For them there was no rest, twenty more coolies pulling on a rope attached to the front allowing them no relaxation. The carriers were relieved at intervals, when, mounting horses, they galloped fiercely ahead for some miles to a point on the roadside, where they took their ease until the arrival of the procession signalled a resumption of labour.

On the Lama's right hand rode Lieutenant Bailey, the Trade Agent, and on the other side of the chair Captain Steen. Both went uncloaked, and as their tight-fitting

tunics and trousers admitted of very little clothes underneath, I momentarily expected to see them drop off their horses and break like icicles into little pieces. Behind the chair rode the Prime Minister, followed by the Abbot of Tashilumpo and the Lama's Tutor, the three chief functionaries of the Court. With them were Fitzgerald and myself, covered over with furs and clothes, and shivering like aspen leaves. Behind us rode the Lama's mother, an apple-cheeked old lady, to whose dumb and deaf condition her son owes his recognition as the reincarnation of a former self. Then followed the Agent's escort of mounted infantry, unhappy Brahmans, whose faces expressed an agonised mixture of proper pride and frost-bite.

Fitzgerald and myself found it difficult to ride in front of a lady, and gradually we dropped out of our places until level with Madame, in whose company we rode thereafter. She was shy at first, dropping her eyes whenever we looked at her, and hiding her face. But conversation being out of the question owing to our ignorance of the language and her inability to hear, we resorted to signs, and made considerable progress in her good graces. Finally, she became quite friendly, and ordered us here and there to take photographs, pinching our arms, tapping the camera, and then pointing to what she considered worthy of being taken. Madame rode like a man, and sat her spirited pony with the skill of a Cossack. I have never been one to rub elbows with Royalty, but hereafter I cannot deny having bumped knees with the mother of a Prince of the Church throughout the whole of one day.

In due time we reached the edge of the dense crowd that for some time had been visible waiting for us at the outskirts of the town. Behind, the maze of white buildings composing the Tashilumpo were spread upon the slope of a hill, and away to the right stood a massive

rock surmounted by the battlements of the jong, under whose shadow lay the town. It made a pretty picture, and the eyes of our friends were visibly gladdened. The advent of the procession was announced by a tremendous burst of music, cymbals clashing noisily, and gigantic horns breathing thunder. A tremor ran along the crowd, and then the people burst through the lines of soldiery that guarded the road, prostrating themselves before the Lama's chair, and fiercely striving to touch their heads upon the woodwork, or even the clothes of a bearer. Lictors, armed with heavy whips, lashed good-naturedly at the more forward, who were chiefly women, ready to risk their lives among the hoofs of the horses if only they might touch something holy. Surrounded by thousands of the devout, the procession was reduced to a crawl, the swashbucklers in front being unable to clear the way.

Strange that in this scene of holy enthusiasm the human voice was dumb. Not a shout could be heard, hardly a whisper. The air resounded with the barbarous but symphonious music, the harmless lashing of whips on heavy sheepskin clothing cracked sharply, and the heavy breathing and panting of a striving multitude made one low continuous murmur. Excited faces compassed us in every direction, those of the women red-eyed and streaked with tears. Masses of men stood spellbound, gazing raptly on the slow-moving equipage which held the being that to them was Divine. Merely to look upon the sacred personage was Communion, to touch was Salvation.

By-and-by a passage was made, and we moved on through a narrow lane flanked by ranks of monks holding aloft the laburums, oriflammes, gonfalons, and other flags of ecclesiastical significance. All the treasures of the monasteries were displayed, vessels of silver and gold, precious boxes, sacred pictures, all were held up that the holy glance falling upon them might render

them more holy. As we passed on the lane of people broke up, and an ever-increasing throng accompanied our progress, every now and again some enthusiast breaking through and rushing up to press forehead against even the hem of a garment of one of the Lama's company. The cymbals clashed incessantly, the deep-throated horns moaned continuously, but the people themselves were silent, only the sound of their thousands of trudging feet being heard. And so we entered Shigatse.

A short interval for rest and refreshment, and there began a "Blessing," the leading feature of ecclesiastical functions in Thibet. In a huge, dimly lighted apartment, divided by rows of massive wooden columns and draped with painted silk and ancient hangings, the Lama sat enthroned. The floor was dense with sombre-clad monks squatting on mats. On either hand of the Lama were seated the officials of State, some clothed in the dark marone of the monasteries, others in the brilliant colours allowed to lay employment. We four British were given a place of honour on the right in front of the row of principal abbots. In a corresponding position on the left were the Chinese Residents, one face full of character and intelligence, the other haggard, with lacklustre eyes, evidence of disease or the fell opium habit. The Lama sat immovable in the dusk of this gloomy chamber, his pale face barely visible under the shadow of the canopy that overhung the throne. The silence was scarcely relieved by the coughing and shuffling of the waiting people. But at last there came a low rumbling voice chanting a prayer. From little more than a mutter it gradually rose and filled the air with resonant sound, then dropped to a whisper, then increased and increased in volume until one imagined in its tones all the deeps of a great cathedral organ. One long-sustained booming note—a rapid descent of the scale—and with a jerk the brief invocation ceased.

The Prime Minister now arose and approached the throne with bowed head and a scarf upheld in both hands. The Lama took the proffered scarf and let his hand dwell for a moment on the head of the Minister, who then backed clear and let his juniors come up one by one. When everybody official had been blessed, there followed in a long *queue* selected persons representing foreign communities, and visitors from distant parts. Of these we were first, and having been provided with silk scarves, we advanced and bowed to the Lama, whose face remained absolutely immobile, eyes looking far away with the unfathomable expression of an image of Buddha. Following us came the Chinese Residents, the Nepalese and Bhutanese Consuls, venerable, white-bearded merchants from Ladakh and Kashmir, and finally a detachment of long-haired and shaggily clad men from the wilds of Chungtang and the distant barbarous valleys of Kham. All the Buddhists put their heads forward to be touched, but Mahomedans and Hindus salaamed deeply. Thereafter the common people were let in to the number of a thousand, and they scurried quickly past the throne, brushing their heads against a thick silken tassel depending from a short stick which the Lama held in his hand. The blessing finished, the Lama retired, the assemblage standing up as he slowly left the chamber supported by officials on either hand.

In the afternoon a reception was held, secular in so far as it is possible to dissociate religious ceremony from the doings of an ecclesiastical community. As before, the Lama was seated on a throne, in a large hall richly ornamented and glowing with colour. The scene was much the same as in the morning, except that the centre of the hall was occupied by a number of small tables covered with platters of sweetmeats and dried fruits. In rear of the tables were great stacks of Thibetan bread—a crisp brown substance fried in butter, and very agreeable

in a cold climate. The bread piles were about six feet high and broad, and, perhaps, ten in length, representing a quantity quite beyond the eating capacity of the guests.

Proceedings began with what had all the appearance of a blessing, except that each person brought a present, which the Lama touched and of which an attendant took possession. The presents consisted of silver shoes worth about £10, vessels of various precious metals, rolls of silk, cloth, &c. When all the gifts had been handed over, the inevitable tea was brought. The Lama had a huge golden pot, studded with turquoises, all to himself. Attendants passed among the seated lamas and filled the wooden cups which the latter produced from the bosoms of their capacious robes. For us four there was a special teapot and Chinese bowls. But as for drinking, we knew better. We blew upon the surface to slide the rancid butter off the top, made a sucking noise with our mouths, and then handed back the cups, sufficiently nauseated, without drinking, by the smell of the tea alone. Next came the distribution of the fruit and sweetmeats, of which we received an ample share. Then came the *pièce de résistance*, the disposal of the enormous quantity of bread. The great doors of the hall were thrown open, and there poured in a horde of struggling humanity that rushed at the stacks of bread. With desperate fury these poor of the city fell on this provision of the gods, crammed the brittle stalks into sacks and bosom, punching their receptacles when full to make room for more. They fought like cannibals for the bread, and stole from each other when they could. And all the while the lictors of the road were among them, lashing with the whips, prodding with the heavy butts, and striking with their fists. One man had two sacks, and though beaten unmercifully, he continued until both were full, and then retired under a rain of blows.

In time the hall was cleared and the floor swept. Then came another round of tea, which gave place to a religious controversy between two monks. These hitched up their clothes, slapped their hands together, stamped their feet, looking for a verbal opening just as a pugilist looks for a chance to get in with his left. One represented Satan and the other some sacred personage, the discussion dealing with the birth of Buddha. Satan said Buddha was born with red trousers ; after which sally he went into loud roars of laughter that drowned the indignant reply of his opponent. The saint then declared that Satan had a tail, whereat every monk in the room laughed delightedly. And so the two kept at it for about half an hour, frequently verging on blows, which never ensued. When Satan looked a winner all over, the controversy was declared closed, and the saint the victor—another injustice to the Devil, who is no more popular in Thibet than in Exeter Hall. More tea, and then dancing by a row of children beginning at 5 feet high and dwindling down to a little dot that could hardly balance itself. They were dressed like girls, but it detracted from the interest of the performance when we discovered they were all boys. Then more tea, and a weird sonata from the band. Finally the Lama rose, and with the slow and solemn step appropriate to holiness passed down and out of the hall, thus ending the ceremonies of the day.

CHAPTER IV.

SHIGATSE TOWN.

LIKE all centres of trade, Shigatse is cosmopolitan. Here congregate merchants from Ladakh, Kashmir, and Gartok in the west; from Bhutan, Sikhim, Nepal, and India in the south; and from Lhasa, Kham, Chetang, and distant China in the east. From the north come no merchants, for there lies the desert Chungtang country, of which Bower, Wellby, the Littledales, and Bonvolat have written in terms of liveliest horror. Nevertheless this desert is not entirely uninhabited, for in summer it is covered with grass which in certain districts affords sustenance to large herds of sheep and cattle, besides numbers of the famous wild yak of Brobdingnagian proportions. The people who wander with their flocks in this desolate region are wild in appearance, and prone to murder and robbery when the opportunity offers. But having shorn their sheep, they must sell the wool. And so they gravitate at certain seasons into the valley of the Tsangpo (Brahmaputra), whereof Shigatse is the principal town.

Besides owning practically all the land in the immediate neighbourhood, the Tashilumpo possesses property in various distant parts, including the semi-inhabited regions bordering the Chungtang. The return of the Tashi Lama from his travels, and the necessity to pay tribute, has brought numbers of Chungtangis to Shigatse,

where their shaggy appearance and cut-throat demeanour give tone to the home-coming ceremonials and put life into the bazaar. Having realised upon their wool, the Chungtangis are flush of money, and they swagger round the open market-place with the assurance of cocks on their own middens. Lots of them are good-natured enough, and submit to the ordeal of the camera with much amusement. But some scowl viciously, and finger their knives with a realism worthy of any Corellian hero. It goes beyond fingering sometimes, as witness the ribs of a lama who, in keeping the ring during a performance, forgot to exercise discrimination in the use of his whip. The obedient Thibetans took their whacking peaceably and crushed back into the crowd, but one fierce figure stood his ground glaring, and got a second dose of the whip. After which the lama had to go to hospital.

The bazaar is held in an open space immediately under the towering rock which upholds the massive buildings of the jong. Merchants bring their wares about eight in the morning and conclude the day's business at twelve, after which you can buy nothing in Thibet, for throughout all the country there are no shops. Shigatse bazaar is unique because of the variety of people who attend it, and because the things that sell here are to be found in no other country. The butchers occupy a long line under a wall, upon which their wares hang. The profession is a simple one in Thibet, for meat cannot go wrong in the cold. The carcass of a sheep will keep for years, and, like wine, age increases its value. Next door are the tea merchants, mostly women, which seems natural. Here you may buy the real Chinese article in lumps, and ask in vain for the product of Assam or Darjeeling. Then there are cloth merchants, and coral merchants, and dealers in turquoises. Makers of stinking, untanned leather bags abound, as do purveyors of thick, woven boot-soles and the cloth leggings which the buyer

must bind together at home. Pots and pans of quaint pattern are offered for sale, and the women flock round the stalls of those who stock coloured cloth and prints from India. But the silk and embroidery come from China, as do the tea sets and the bowls in which a Thibetan meal is served. Brass and copper ware is very expensive, and iron work is crude to a degree. A great business is that of herb-selling, many different varieties totally unknown to the pharmacopœia scenting the air. Vegetables are scarce in the winter-time, but dried fruits are plentiful, including peaches, apricots, raisins, and currants. Fish from the adjacent Tsangpo are purchasable, and you may buy bundles of astrakhan for three annas a skin. Furs of many kinds are displayed, including lynx, fox, wolf, wild cat, bear, yak, and the thick handsome skin of the snow leopard. And if you are simple and trusting, they will sell you for Rs. 30 the pod of a musk-deer from which the precious ointment has already been extracted.

Shigatse reeks of human nature. The women spank their children, and cajole their husbands in the matter of finery. The men get drunk and sing unrepeatable songs, and even the lamas have their lapses. Fathers are anxious about the doings of their sons, and mothers teach their daughters to walk warily. Beggars infest the sunny side of walls and address wayfarers by high-sounding titles. Half-grown lamas smack their unfrocked brothers and sisters, and errand-boys loiter at the corners of the streets. A fiddler draws a crowd, and a family difference begets a local curiosity that could not be surpassed in the Old Kent Road. Lamas walk with the humility of the pious or with the gravity of the learned, while the muleteer curses his beasts in the raucous voice that appeals to the four-footed throughout the world. Girls trot hurriedly by if alone, talk confidentially when in pairs, and giggle irrepressibly when they are three or

more. Humanity here exists at a level of 13,000 feet above the sea, but between it and the humanity of lower levels there is apparent hardly the thirteen-thousandth part of a difference.

At Shigatse we see much of the Lama, for none of the receptions and entertainments consequent on his safe return are complete without the presence of the foreigners. Every day there is a blessing, followed by music and dancing by bands of villagers, who come to contribute their share to the general rejoicing. Every outlying monastery sends in a batch of monks, who solemnly parade before concourses of the faithful, beating their cymbals and roaring through gigantic horns. Even the female monks are represented, their heads shaven and their looks downcast. If appearances suggest correctly, it is the matrimonial disappointments who take the veil in Thibet. When we go to the gumpa we are invariably treated with honour and kindness, and the slightest encouragement to any lama makes him beam with geniality and benevolence. There are here hundreds of lamas like Kim's, men who would not hurt a fly, and whose sole idea is the pursuit of righteousness. The tales of loose living which are so easy to level against the holy appear to have no foundation in fact, so far as Tashilumpo is concerned. The Lama himself has clean living clearly written on his face, and the traditions of the gumpa and its many dependencies are all against indulgence. It is easy enough to conceal licentiousness, but it is impossible to hide the nature of the soil wherein it might flourish. Where 5000 celibates are herded together, many in the spring-time of life, there cannot be but some backsliding. But the simplicity of monastic life, its devotional rigours and midnight prayers, are all against frailty; and if impressions are worth anything as compared with positive knowledge, my belief is that no existing community could be more respectable and decent-living than that of Tashilumpo.

Certain non-ecclesiastic officials invite us to their houses, where we eat Thibetan food and obtain a glimpse of domestic life. The fare is first-class eating, meat being cooked to perfection, and seasoned and salted to suit any reasonable taste. Only the tea we cannot stand—we have had so much of it now that we can barely summon up enough courage to give the conventional blow at the floating grease. The women peep about in the background and take a lively interest in us, though not daring to intrude themselves on our notice. But we are not so backward, and when the time for taking a photograph comes we insist on their appearance. Their timidity is highly becoming, especially in the younger ones, who need much encouragement. It is the greatest fallacy to suppose that Thibetan women are all ugly. The grease with which the lower-class women smear their faces to protect the skin from the biting wind is repulsive at first, but one soon learns to detect a pretty face underneath, and to forget the unsightly cosmetic in the presence of bright eyes and winning expression. Well-to-do women who need not go out of doors except in fine weather do not use the grease, besides which they wash regularly, or at least look as if they did, with the result that they present a highly pleasing appearance even to the fastidious European.

During our stay at Shigatse we paid a visit to the Nepalese Consul, a gentleman with the rank of lieutenant, who received us with great kindness. He produced cakes and Thibetan whisky of much potency, and a little son who went to school every day. Another day we visited the Chinese Resident, a person of much dignity and commander of a hundred scaramouches, whose band played us in and out with all the disregard of euphony which only Celestial music can attain. Here we were in quite another atmosphere, where knowledge of the world and advanced education exuded at every pore. The Chinaman is to Thibet as the Sahib is to Hindustan

—only more so. This exile among barbarians deprecated his surroundings, and regretted his inability to receive us fittingly. We discussed politics and art, religion and gastronomy, like true dilettanti, and bemoaned the tendencies of the times. But this Chinaman was a good human after all, as became evident when he warmed into telling us that his time was up in Thibet, and that he was off home to China in a day or two.

Then we gave a party. Two officials of the Lama's household and their sons were our guests, besides a duke, who owes his title to the fact of his being own brother to the Lama. No ladies were invited, not because we did not think of them, but because the poor things are not allowed into society. Our visitors handled their knives and forks with considerable skill, though perhaps it was due more to luck than to judgment that their tongues escaped. They were death on everything tasting of meat, but displayed no interest in a pudding. Scotch whisky gave them much joy, and *crème de menthe* sent them into ecstasies. After lunch we amused them with guns and rifles, and pictures and photographs. Then they went home—to fill up on Thibetan food, our servants told us. The Thibetan is a great trencherman, and when visiting India with the Lama it was customary for most of the retinue to astonish their hosts by their appetites, and then to go back to camp and gorge on national cookery.

The Tashilumpo itself is a regular town in extent, comprising streets and squares in apparently endless confusion. Its principal features are five temples erected to the memory of the five departed Tashi Lamas, or rather to the various reincarnations of the same individual. These are handsome and massive buildings of stone and wooden beams, with roofs ornamented in Chinese fashion. Inside are images of Buddha, supported by rows of vessels of ancient workmanship and faced by

enormous copper bowls filled with butter, upon which float burning wicks. In each of the five temples, which are all much alike, inside and out, are huge teapots which, if the monks are to be believed, are made of pure gold. Otherwise the value of the things we saw can be but small, though possibly some of the metal work would be accounted curious in Europe. Probably the sacking to which Tashilumpo was subjected by the Nepalese in the latter part of the eighteenth century is responsible for the apparent absence of valuables.

After a week's stay at Shigatse Fitzgerald and myself decided to commence the long and trying journey that was to take us over unexplored country towards the Sikhim border. The Lama signified a wish to receive a farewell visit from us, and after the usual morning *darbar* we were received privately, and spent about an hour with his Holiness in his own quarters. We presented presents of considerable value, but these were not accepted as we were guests in the country, and should only receive presents, which were given to us in the shape of copper and silver worked teapots of handsome appearance and some value. The Lama showed us many of his treasures, and talked upon many subjects, leaving the impression on our minds of a very simple and kind-hearted young man. His faith in human nature is unshaken as yet, and his friendship for things and people British is undeniable. Our farewell was quite touching, the Lama begging us to remember that we should ever be welcome in his country, and hoping to see us again. I said that his next journey must be to London, where he would be sure of a welcome. But he rather mournfully said that he was afraid that was out of the question. And then we said good-bye to this truly amiable and gentle-minded young man, for whom perhaps the future holds great things, as things go in this part of the world.

CHAPTER V.

ACROSS UNTRODDEN GROUND.

SHIGATSE left behind, we enter the mountains to the south-west and commence our journey towards the Sikkim border. The first day's march took us along the valley traversed by the party of British officers who visited Gartok in the autumn of 1904. By this valley also had come from the opposite direction the Roman Catholic pioneers of 1708, who, entering Thibet from Nepal, travelled through Dingri to Shigatse and thence to Lhasa. Sarat Chandra Das had also approached Shigatse from this direction in 1879. Indeed this valley, being on the trade route from the west of Thibet, has frequently been traversed, and is well known. Here stands a monastery long famed for its printing-press. In winter the press does not work, probably because the ink cannot be kept from freezing, and we are disappointed in our hopes of witnessing the manner in which sacred literature is manufactured in Thibet. All around a big hall are ranged in shelves the printing-blocks, which are simply rectangular pieces of wood upon which a whole page of lettering has been carved. When in action a block is held in a vice and then levered by hand on to the paper, where it leaves a facsimile of the carving on its face. The process is simple and expeditious, and several bulky volumes can be printed off in a day. But the blocks, of which there

are very many thousands, represent long and patient labour, their workmanship and finish being very fine. Of the usual adjuncts of a printing-press there are none at Nartang Monastery, except that the unwashed condition of some of the monks, and all of the attendants, entitles them to rank with printers' devils.

We were fortunate at Nartang to find New Year festivities in full swing. In a large courtyard in front of the gumpa about thirty monks were solemnly perambulating to the dirge of a band, and under the eyes of the assembled countryside. Their idea of dancing was limited to alternate lifting of the legs and solemn pirouetting, which lacked the interest of high kicking and the charm of skirt-dancing. But the grotesque dress and demoniac headgear of the performers was quite enough for the onlookers, who were entranced with the entertainment. Though entirely unexpected, the abbot received us with great courtesy, making room for us in the balcony overlooking the courtyard where he himself sat, and providing cakes and the inevitable tea, of which the butter becomes more rancid the farther away from Shigatse.

From Nartang we turned due south, leaving the trade route and entering country which had never before been trodden by Europeans. We had been warned by the Shigatse people that the route was wild and desolate, and that our way would be beset with difficulties. They could not understand that our anxiety to take this road was caused by the entire blankness of the map. Before leaving the Nartang Valley I had the luck to bring down three enormous cranes with a single barrel. These were sailing heavily along in a row, and their sudden collapse so astonished the gun-coolie that he regarded me thereafter as a magician. Bullets are understood in Thibet, but small-shot is quite uncomprehended.

So far we had travelled by a comparatively beaten track, but hereafter we struck due south, and entered a maze of mountains springing from a plateau about 15,000 feet above sea-level. Population was very sparse, though most of the valleys in which we travelled bore evidence of having been widely cultivated in times past. Ruined houses and villages were frequent, and we assumed they dated back at least one hundred years, perhaps two hundred. Throughout four days' march we shot continuously duck, partridge, crane, and hare. The latter could be found on any hillside, but the operation of walking them up on terribly broken ground was extremely laborious. One day we came to a small thicket about 100 yards long by 50 wide. We beat this promising-looking place for hare, but were disappointed to see not a sign of fur until at the very end of the cover, when there suddenly debouched about fifty grey shadows, which cantered slowly off in every direction. The Thibetan hare, so far as we have encountered him, is most delicious eating, and the prejudice against him in India as an article of diet is certainly not applicable here, where he cannot be anything but a clean feeder.

The strike of the hills among which we were travelling was generally south-west, and our usual day's journey consisted of a march along a valley and the negotiation of a pass which took us into a parallel valley. Our course, though zigzag, was southerly, and we were not compelled to make any serious deviation from our general direction. The valleys in which we travelled were cultivated as a rule in a very minor degree, and all water was frozen, one valley in particular showing a most picturesque series of white bands traversing the yellow ground. The passes we crossed were bleak, cold, and windy, and high enough to set heart and lungs pumping violently. Elevations varied between 15,000 and 17,000 feet. On the fourth day out we entered a broad and well-watered

valley, through which ran a river that joins the Tsangpo a hundred miles west of Shigatse.

Here was situated Rhe Jong, a fort perched upon the point of a rock that towered perpendicularly out of the bed of the river, and attained a height of exactly 1000 feet. The Jongpen awaited us at a little hamlet nestling at the bottom, and we expressed a wish to visit his aerial home. He demurred, and explained that the road up was both tedious and dangerous, and that no European had ever seen even the outside of his jong. Asiatics never seem to grasp the fact that danger and novelty are just the thing that render a European's desires uncontrollable. Fitzgerald and myself would have taken that jong at the point of our hunting-knives rather than miss such an opportunity of breaking our necks and doing what no other white man had done before. The Jongpen had orders from Tashilumpo to provide us with every facility, and the hint that it might be necessary for us to complain of his disobligingness made him anxious to conciliate. And soon we were mounted and scrambling up the lower slopes of this road to heaven.

It surprised us rather to see the Jongpen mount a pony, but we assumed that the lower approaches were easy, and riding feasible. So we followed suit, to the annoyance of our nags, who had deemed their day's work at an end. We began by a nasty scramble up the face of a precipice, but as the drop was only twenty to eighty feet, we had no cause for complaint. Besides which no white man can ever decline to follow when an Asiatic leads—that is an axiom of life east of Suez, whether the road leads to glory or into the depths of Gehenna. Having scraped sideways up the front of the precipice, we came to a sharp ridge that stretched upward at about the same angle as the shrouds of a ship. Here our leader halted his pony to give it breath. I was

behind the Jongpen and Fitzgerald, my pony's forefeet planted upon a tiny plateau, his hind quarters and feet two steps down the precipice we had just ascended, while his tail wagged over the village far below. I remained in the saddle, for the excellent reason that there was no place to stand on if I had dismounted; besides which instinct told me that the slightest movement on my part would cause my panting steed to lose his balance, and result in our mutual precipitation into one of the gulfs which yawned on either side. At that moment I remembered the words of Richard Burton, to the effect that voyaging was victory; and I wondered if the great traveller had ever encountered situations that combined with victory the clammy sweat of mortal agony. Probably not, for Burton was a wise man, and did his travelling on the flat. It is a curious but indisputable fact that horses are incapable of giddiness, and that they scramble carelessly over places which ordinary human beings cannot contemplate without shuddering.

From the jong our view was restricted owing to a raging wind loaded with dust. Every now and then there would be a lull, and then we caught glimpses of distant mountain-tops, of deep valleys, and sometimes of snowy peaks. The jong itself was empty and cold, not even a garrison in occupation or a gun mounted on the battlements. Then we discovered why the Jongpen had been so reluctant to bring us up—the unfortunate man lived down below, and never went near his jong if he could possibly avoid it. And no blame to him. Along a knife-like ridge in rear of the jong a gampa clung precariously to the rocks, and here some twenty monks passed a dreary existence, buoyed up only by their proximity to the Nirvana which is their only earthly hope. To be so high up is no small advantage, for the wind is frequently so violent that a baggily clad monk has every chance of being caught up like Elijah and attaining

eternity without the trouble of dying. The gumpa was a regular curio-shop of old ecclesiastical treasures, among which we noticed some very old-fashioned scale armour. Everything was dirty and rusty, and I imagine none of the things were of much value.

During our reconnaissance from the top of Rhe Jong we located a tall conical mountain which appeared to command an extensive view. As this peak would probably open up the hills that were surveyed by the Younghusband Mission from Khamba Jong in 1903, we decided to climb it and link up the topography of the country. We judged the height at 20,000 feet, and there was very little snow on the top to impede progress. After a day's marching we camped near the foot of our mountain, and Fitzgerald, observing burhel on the slopes, climbed 2000 feet and got a stout ram, the bullet passing through it and killing a little doe beyond. In the morning we started long before daybreak, with the temperature about 10 degrees below zero, and rode as far up the mountain as our horses could carry us. We dismounted at 17,000 feet and began the day's labour. Three thousand feet sounds a very moderate climb, and so it is at sea-level. But up here it is a very different matter, every step on the flat entailing an extra heart-beat, while actually to lift the body amounts to a severe strain. I defy any normal human being to take more than ten steps on a steep hillside at an elevation of 18,000 feet without resting, not so much for breath, but to ease the panting of the heart, which feels as if it must rend the chest. Besides which one is enveloped in sheepskin clothes that impede movement and greatly add to weight. It took me five mortal hours to surmount 3000 feet. Fitzgerald reached the top in four hours, when I had still 500 feet to go. But you cannot expect the same performance from a scribbler as you do from the aide-de-camp to a full General. All our aneroids were paralysed

when we got to the top, but the hypsometer, in which the boiling of the water was a task for Sisyphus, indicated just under the 20,000. The temperature, despite a bright sun high in the heavens, was 22° F. During the descent we almost ran into a string of burhel, numbering about fifty rams and females. We were on the top of a cliff under which they were walking quietly along in Indian file. They were almost immediately below us, not more than eighty yards distant. Of course the idiots with our rifles were behind, and the herd was off before they came up.

Having descended our mountain, which we named Campbell-Bannerman on account of its commanding position, we remounted our horses and proceeded to negotiate a pass which the Thibetans had described as particularly easy. So far as grade is concerned it certainly was easy, but we were not prepared to reach 18,000 feet after ten miles of slow ascent. On the other side there was practically no fall, the reverse consisting of a great plateau of rolling downs varying between 17,000 and 19,000 feet. Despite the great height, this was covered with coarse grass, upon which thousands of gazelle were feeding and strolling about. We thought that in so desolate and uninhabited a region these graceful creatures would have been tame enough to allow of our getting within range. But, on the contrary, they were extremely timid, and scampered off when we got within 800 yards.

The country we were now in was probably as high as any in Thibet, swept by terrific winds for six or eight hours every day, and entirely without houses or inhabitants. Throughout four days we never met a single wayfarer, and a more bleak or more lonely region it would be hard to imagine. Each night we were fortunate in striking shepherds living in tents, who in the evening, when their flocks were gathered together, supplied us

with milk and fuel. Their encampments were surrounded by stone dykes, built to protect the sheep from marauding wolves. Without the partial cover of these walls our tents must have been torn from the ground, so violent was the wind.

This desert crossed, we reached the village of Dotha, within a mile of which members of the Younghusband Mission reached in 1903. They would have come farther doubtless, but the pass leading to the village was blocked by a great wall, through which a regiment of Thibetans declined to let them pass. Dotha will remain in our memories by reason of the sand-grouse, which we slaughtered in great numbers. Those beautiful little birds, in coveys of ten to forty, covered the ground around the village during the morning we were there. We began by walking them up, and firing as they rose. Four barrels of sixes often resulted in only one or two birds, for their feathers are very thick, and the shot fails to penetrate. But when disturbed and fighting, they give grand sport. And for the pot they could not be surpassed.

From Dotha we march down an immense open plain covered with grass and intersected by numerous frozen streams, whereof the water bubbles noisily under the ice. Here are large flocks of sheep and yak, looking fat as butter and perfectly contented with their lot. From this plain we cross a low range of hills, and find ourselves facing the Sikhim boundary and the tremendous barrier of ice and snow of which Kinchinjunga is the principal point. In the extreme east lies Powhunri, a mass of serrated peaks and tumbling glaciers. Next him stands square-topped Kinchinjow, and then the elegant head of Chumiomo rears itself in the air. Beyond these Pandim, Kubra, Kinchinjunga, and many others are inextricably mixed; while away to the southwest are the perpetual snows of the Nepalese mountains,

Everest, the highest in the world, floating ghostlike in the horizon, distant over a hundred miles. To the immediate west shimmers the large and unexplored Lake Telthung.

During the day we passed sulphur springs, whence the water rises so hot that one's finger retires from contact like a bullet from a gun. A small pond kept at a reasonable temperature is used for bathing, for which purpose a family arrived during our inspection. We got our cameras ready, intending to establish indisputable evidence that Thibetans are capable of washing. But the women of the party held back, not from reasons of modesty, we understood, but because they were afraid we would steal their clothes when they were in the water. After nearly three months of Thibet we were certainly a disreputable-looking pair, and our beards, of which females in Thibet have a horror, as their husbands cannot grow them, were quite enough to arouse suspicion. We also had entertained the idea of bathing, until the advent of the party, when we changed our minds—but not because we were afraid of having our clothes stolen. Here we shot a brace of Brahminy ducks, which, during the cooking, smelt so strongly of brimstone that we gave them to the servants, who gave them to the dogs, who wouldn't look at them. Brahminys in other parts of Thibet make splendid soup, but I suppose even a duck cannot touch pitch without being defiled. The presence of these tawny Brahminys looked peculiarly appropriate to the sulphurous deposit that covered the ground, and we wondered if the birds derived their colour in any degree from the character of what was evidently a favourite spot.

Our camp that evening was very cold, and the temperature dropped to 9 degrees below zero in the early morning. Despite a bright sun in the forenoon, we could not avoid a feeling of chilliness, doubtless due

to the endless vista of snowy mountains on the southern horizon. But a young lady engaged in weaving cloth, in an open compound adjoining our camp, had no such ideas, for she stripped to the waist while working. Our next march was terribly long, about twenty-five miles we judged, and landed us at a nunnery, which perhaps accounted for such a display of stamina. *En route* we passed Khamba Jong, under the walls of which I shot the only snipe we had seen in Thibet. Arrived at Trasung Anigompa, we were disappointed to find that neither the abbess nor any of her nuns were waiting us, though they sent many servitors of the other sex to attend to our wants. Our camp was fifteen miles due east of Khamba Jong, our object in diverting from the straight road south being to map the country eastward, towards the Kala or Bham Lakes, which had never been explored.

Basing ourselves at the anigompa (*ani* before *gompa* makes a monastery into a nunnery), Fitzgerald surveyed and sketched for two days, while I wrote up my notes. After two days of work we decided to take a holiday with our rifles. Starting about two in the morning we rode for several hours, each in a different direction, and at daylight I found myself with the shikari at the mouth of a gorge in a mass of mountains. Leaving our horses, we advanced into the heart of this wild place, and after climbing about 1000 feet perceived four burhel quietly feeding on a slope in front. We stalked them for half an hour, but the ground gave no opportunity for getting within range. The only way to get a shot was to climb round the top of the mountain we were on, and hope to get at them from the other side. All four were rams with good heads, so I made up my mind for what must be an hour's grind and a climb of 1500 feet.

After a weary ascent we had nearly gained the top

of the mountain on the side farther from the burhel, when the shikari suddenly stiffened like a pointer and fell on his face. And no wonder, for a cautious peep ahead showed a herd of animals peaceably feeding. We dropped back clear of the skyline and worked round to a heap of rocks, behind which it was possible to prepare for action. Here I found a hole through which I could see with binoculars, and bringing them to bear I became suddenly faint as I realised that I was gazing, not at burhel, but at *Ovis ammon*. There were seven rams and three females, all cropping the grass, bar one—a monster old ram with shaggy grey hair round his neck, and horns that swept the ground, and so big at the base that they made his face look out of all proportion. There was a general appearance of greyness about the brute that made him look aged, and probably it was on account of his years and those heavy horns that he was resting instead of eating like the others. Shooting on virgin soil one never knows what may be encountered, and on such a spot nothing was more possible than a record head. I'm afraid there was fear and trembling in the hands that poked the .303 into the cleft in the rocks, and a dimness in the eyes that endeavoured to draw a bead on that hoary old patriarch of the mountains. For no sooner had the report of the rifle commenced reverberating among the hilltops than he was off like a racehorse, horns and all, and I never set eyes on him or any of his herd again. At 200 yards I ought to have got him, but the eccentricity of gravity, and the rarity of the air consequent on an elevation of 18,000 feet, modify the trajectory of a bullet so considerably that one needs perfect calmness to make proper allowances. Calm I was not, and so that ram roams in Thibet to this day.

Of course the burhel were gone, and though I tramped the mountains until dusk we saw never another hoof.

The only living creature we encountered was a huge lammergeier perched on a rock. The creature was laughing at me in his beard, and I would have shot him if he hadn't been sitting within twenty feet of me, and helpless after a gorge on a dead yak. At our standing camp I found Fitzgerald, who had ridden ten miles to give me news of a herd of *ammon* that he had found. He had shot two and found that they continued to feed in the neighbourhood; and knowing that I was very keen, he had given up his chance of bagging more, that I might have an equal opportunity—which shows that the sportsman is not yet extinct, despite the degeneracy of the times. Next day I hunted high and low for the *ammon*, and did come on them—only to score another miss. Evidently I am down for a peerage, or matrimony, or some other form of Fortune, for I have no luck with hornéd beasts.

CHAPTER VI.

RE-CROSSING THE FRONTIER.

OUR time in Thibet was now up, and we prepared to return to India. From Trasang Anigompa we marched to Giri, a desolate and wind-swept little village close to the border, and the last inhabited place in Thibetan territory on the road to Sikhim. Here we had arranged for thirty coolies to take our baggage across the passes, which we had been warned were impassable to ponies or mules. But a panic spread among the men who had been engaged, and they all bolted during the night. We were now stranded in a desert country which there seemed no way of leaving. At this juncture the lieutenant in command of the Chinese post came to our rescue, and his rascallions beat the village, producing six ponies and eight coolies. Sacrificing our riding ponies to transport necessities, we then made a start, hoping that the Thibetan predictions regarding the difficulty of the frontier passes would be falsified.

For several hours we toiled up a gentle slope that led to the wall of ice and snow constituting the Sikhim frontier. From a distance it seemed impossible that there could be a gap, so compact and precipitous was the appearance of this marvellous and stupendous barricade. But as we crawled upward the mass before us gradually changed front, and we realised that what appeared to be one straight line of mountain was in

reality a tumbled maze through which it was possible to wind. Chumiomo, 22,400 feet, stood out in front, and by working round to its rear we found ourselves on the flank of Kinchinjow, 23,000 feet, though at one time it seemed impossible to pass between these two without surmounting some towering spur clothed in perpetual ice and snow. Our highest point was the Kangra La, 16,900 feet, and here we found the gorge between the mountains wide and open, and just sprinkled with snow. Eternal ice glittered high up on either side of the way, and in front was a vista of dazzling white tops that lost themselves in the cobalt of heaven.

In Thibet snow seldom lies below 19,000 feet, and very little above that; a white top is a rare sight among the innumerable peaks that serrate the horizon of a Thibetan landscape. So curious a circumstance is accounted for by the paucity of the rainfall, which in some parts of the valley of the Tsangpo is said to average about eight inches per annum, while in other regions it is certainly much less. The humidity of the atmosphere is exceedingly low throughout the year. Were these conditions reversed, and Thibet subject to greater humidity and a heavier rainfall, it is unquestionable that the country would be completely Arctic in character, and that the accumulated snow, in the shape of glaciers, would overflow the low-lying ground and form an eternal sheet of ice. But the Himalayas block the passage of the southern monsoons and force the moisture-laden clouds from equatorial regions to disgorge their burthen. Hence we have an extraordinary provision of nature, withholding from the Thibetan plateau the moisture that would render it uninhabitable, and catching on the Himalayan slopes the waters that irrigate India, which otherwise would be an arid and humanly impossible desert.

An incomplete understanding of this phenomenon

nearly landed our small party in disaster, for we had never quite realised that, though the country in which we had been travelling was free from snow at great heights, we should encounter on the other side of the Himalayan range a totally different condition. On the northern side of the frontier the snow-line is practically 20,000 feet, even in winter, but on the southern slopes of the watershed accumulated ice and snow, consequent on continual saturation, extend down to 8000 feet, at which point the heat of the Indian sun defeats further advance. So from the moment we crossed the main ridge of the Himalayas we found snow in increasing quantity. At first it lay in drifts which could be circumnavigated or crossed. But having descended about 1000 feet we found the drifts so deep and continuous that the labour of ploughing through greatly increased, and our horses became worn out. After so hard a day's journey it was necessary to halt and rest men and beasts.

We camped for the afternoon and evening, intending to start again at night, when we hoped that the ponies would be able to proceed upon the crust of frozen snow that usually forms after sundown. Seldom perhaps has it been vouchsafed to mere man to travel amid such magic surroundings. Those who have visited Darjeeling and witnessed the unrivalled barrier of mountain and glacier which forms the northern boundary of Sikkim will understand our situation. Within a distance of sixty miles are ranged a series of snow-clad mountains in which no fewer than twelve peaks measure over 22,000 feet. King among them is Kinchinjunga, 28,150 feet, supported by others varying between 26,000 feet and 23,000 feet above sea-level. Our intention was to go slap through the middle of this wilderness of mountain, glacier, and eternal snow. It was strange to think that we were to plunge into the very midst

of these Snowy Mountains upon which, three months before, I had gazed with such awe and wonder. From the Thibetan side they do not overshadow the horizon as they do from Sikkim, but the memory of the mighty view from the south filled me with an overwhelming curiosity to explore, and with a feeling of dread that could not be suppressed.

About ten o'clock we struck camp and moved off in brilliant moonlight that, reflected by the snow, made the surroundings as bright almost as day. Perspective was curiously affected by the shimmering snow, and we seemed to be moving at the bottom of a deep white cup that offered no outlet. All around towered tremendous heights, their slopes scarred with black shadow cast by overhanging rocks. Here and there glaciers flashed back the light of the moon, and in the far distance a lofty icefield sparkled and shone like a sheet of polished silver. Beside us a subglacial stream roared and hissed in the chasms and caverns of the glacier that carried it. Otherwise dead silence reigned, for avalanches are held fast in the grip of the evening frost. The night was delicious, for no glare came from the snow and no wind penetrated to the bones. Warmly clad, we were unconscious of cold, indeed conscious only of the fairyland in which we moved.

But, alas, our horses and coolies fared differently. They, poor creatures, were floundering along in grievous fashion, falling and losing their loads, sinking up to their chests in soft snow, and breaking their hearts in the endeavour to regain a firm footing. After five hours of infinite toil we called a halt, for further progress seemed impossible. At three o'clock Fitzgerald decided to go forward with a couple of coolies and reconnoitre. I camped with the remainder of our train, waiting to hear what the road was like ahead. After a long rest men and horses regained strength, and at ten in the

morning we started again, no word having reached us from Fitzgerald. After two hours of struggling with adversity, in which time we had only advanced about half a mile, a note came from Fitzgerald to say that the snow in front was infinitely worse, and impassable to horses. He said it was best to send all the baggage back to Giri, with instructions to the native officer in charge to return to India by the Chumbi Valley. He suggested my coming on and catching him at Tangu. In a few minutes I had given the Jemadar his orders, had packed up my bedding, and made a start. In the full belief that there lay before me no more than a few miles of hard going I took a very small quantity of food, for Fitzgerald had warned me not to overload the coolies, of which I took only two, as the remainder were necessary for the return of our transport to Giri.

Already fatigued by the exertions of the night before, and the endeavour in the morning to find a passage for the transport animals, I began my tramp to Tangu in that philosophic frame of mind which perceives a goal only, and ignores intervening difficulties. I hoped to get through to the northernmost village in Sikhim by evening, and there to rest for a week. But the sun went down and found us still toiling through the snow, now floundering up to the waist, at other times tumbling head over heels down a slope. At nine o'clock one of the coolies pointed to the end of the valley in which we were travelling, and uttered the word *Tangu*. The valley was brilliantly white in the moonlight, but at the extremity was a dark patch of forest. In this I saw a flicker of light, which, when examined through the glasses, showed as dancing fire-light from the door of a wooden cottage. So satisfied was I of the reality of this vision that I quite recovered strength and, followed by the coolies, made a vigorous effort to cover the remaining mile of journey. But in

the patch of forest there was no cottage, nor any sign of light or of human habitation. The picture seen through the glasses, which to this day I could draw with full details, was a pure hallucination, product of disordered nerves and exhausted vitality. One comfort there was—the footsteps of Fitzgerald and his coolies were quite distinct in the snow, and soon afterwards I came to the place where he had written the note and sent one man back, the little episode being easily understood from the marks. Fortunately, owing to the bright moonlight, there was no possibility of missing the way.

At eleven o'clock I reached the Tangu bungalow, to find it perched on a small hill a hundred feet up from the level of the valley. It took me exactly an hour to make this little climb, and when I stumbled in upon Fitzgerald I could barely stand. Nor could I speak until a hot cup of tea put some life into my wearied body.

Tangu, I had imagined, would signal the end of our hardships and the return to normal conditions. But Fitzgerald's greeting included very different information. There were still twenty miles to be covered before we were out of snow and safe in the village of Lachen, the most northerly populated place in Sikkim during the winter. Tangu was certainly full of houses, but they were all empty, the owners having retired south, all but one old couple who looked after the rest-house. They had no food to spare, and if we and our coolies were not to starve we must resume the march at once. A night's rest was imperative, but in the morning we set out, not very briskly, but with the determination engendered by a vanishing larder.

From Tangu we had a horrible journey, the way proving harder even than we had been led to anticipate. We were continually sinking waist-deep into the snow, and slipping upon treacherous ground. Our coolies, who

had less food than we had, stuck to their task most manfully, though greatly exhausted and suffering from snow-blindness. We usually travelled all night, halting now and again in the day when the heat of the sun and the glare on the snow became almost unbearable. Half-way to Lachen the mountains close in, and form narrow ravines of great beauty and picturesqueness. But the steepness of their sides results in continuous avalanches and landslips in these early days of spring thaw. The road, of course, was covered with snow, but we were able to follow it except where it had been completely swept away into the gorge below. At such places we had to run considerable risk crossing snow or rock slides, which, beginning thousands of feet above, ended in a racing torrent hundreds of feet below. Cutting steps was simple enough, but it was quite another thing whether or not our weight, on a steep descent where everything was in a state of poise, might not set the whole hillside in motion. To senses dulled by fatigue, however, one place was very like another, and we ploughed our way along without much thought of the consequences.

Eventually we got through, completely exhausted, after sixty-three hours' toil, alternated with short spells of sleep. The impulse to lie down by the way was often almost irresistible, but we kept each other going. The coolies were very badly off for food, and Fitzgerald and myself did not fare much better. Our boots suffered worst, and Fitzgerald was practically barefooted when we arrived at Lachen. Several times we came across the tracks of bear and leopard, and in such starving weather it was necessary to look out for denizens of the forest. When at last we were nearing Lachen we were greatly tickled to encounter two men armed with bows and arrows, who said they had come every day for a week to meet us, having been instructed from Gantok that two Sahibs were expected through the pass. At first we

thought the bows and arrows were to be used for our destruction, but it appeared they were meant for defence against wild beasts. At Lachen our adventures ended, for thereafter we were out of snow, marching down the lovely valley of the Teesta, with only the white ridge of Himalaya in the rear to remind us of past toil. After all, Burton must have known both sides of the question, else he could never have understood enough to write that voyaging is victory.

There is no doubt we had cause to congratulate ourselves that we were well out of a bad fix; but our feelings were mixed, for though we had escaped, we were in complete ignorance of the fate of our caravan. After leaving Tangu a storm occurred in the mountains behind, and we greatly feared that the Jemadar and his following had been caught in it. Our relief was great when, a fortnight later, we heard that the party under the Jemadar had reached the Chumbi Valley in safety, after undergoing many vicissitudes. Jemadar Shahzad Mir, our native surveyor, had been the cheeriest and most helpful of comrades throughout our travels, never sick or sorry, and always game for anything. He has seen a lot of the world, and some idea of the extent of his wanderings will be gathered from the following record: In 1886-87 he served with the Afghan Boundary Commission, in 1889 he travelled with Younghusband in the Pamirs, and in 1895 accompanied the Pamir Commission. In 1898 he went on secret service into the dangerous country inhabited by the frontier tribes. In 1898 he crossed Thibet to Peking with Wellby, and again in 1899 accompanied that distinguished traveller to the Soudan, the sources of the Nile, and Lake Rudolph, ending up in London, where he received much attention. In 1902 he was in Abyssinia, and in 1903 served with the Abyssinian Boundary Commission. Besides these adventures, he has contrived to serve with his regiment, the 11th P. W. O.

Lancers, twice in Hazara, twice in Chitral, of which once was with the Relief Force, and in the Buner Expedition. In addition to medals for active service he has been awarded the MacGregor medal for survey, and has received other acknowledgments of his splendid work. The Jemadar is forty-seven, and says he is getting old and must retire to his *jaghir*. But he is still full of beans, and lives in the hope that when his time is up he will receive that most coveted of rewards, a Khan Sahibship. And surely no man deserves it more.

Notes.—Since these details have been printed the Jemadar has been decorated with the new Order, recently instituted by the King, and designed to reward distinguished services by officers of the native army in India.

CHAPTER VII.

STRATEGIC AND ECONOMIC.

A MILITARY camp surrounded on three sides by natural protection from attack offers a comparatively simple problem to the commander responsible for its safety. The open side requires fortification; the other sides, bounded, say, by a river, a swamp, and a lake, need watching. That these obstacles preclude the possibility of the camp being rushed by an enemy, does not mean in the least that they are insurmountable. In fact, they offer great opportunities for attack in the dark, particularly as the security they confer often leads to omission of the necessary precautions. But if these three sides are properly picqueted, not only will surprise be impossible, but the enemy will leave them severely alone, permitting the whole energy of the encamped force to be expended in securing the vulnerable side.

This is precisely the situation in India. We have the sea on either side of the peninsula and the Himalayas on the north, both presenting serious obstacles to military aggression. So long as our fleet commands the sea and our politicals watch the Himalayas, the whole resources of India may be devoted to the remaining and vulnerable side, that thousand miles of front stretching from Baluchistan to the Pamirs. The degree in which this front is vulnerable is one of the leading military questions of the day; but as this chapter is concerned

with another section of our frontier, I do not propose to do more than premise that vulnerability does exist, and that defence of the north-western frontier is an essential consideration of Indian government.

Carrying further the parallel of a camp, it might be said that the Russian intrigues in Thibet, which were responsible for our recently awakened interest in that country, constituted something in the nature of a night attack from an unexpected direction. Believing our Indian camp secure from aggression on the Himalayan side, we had neglected not only the posting of picquets, but we had failed to maintain our prestige by the enforcement of treaty conditions. And the consequence was an expedition, trifling in dimensions no doubt, but one that violated an immutable principle of military defence by diverting strength from the real defensive line to a point that ordinary precautions should have made secure. In 1885 we had an opportunity of establishing ourselves in Lhasa, but other interests caused us to forgo the opening. Had we not sacrificed the right of entry to Lhasa for concessions in Burmah, there probably would have been free intercourse with Thibet since 1886, and the situation which gave rise to the expedition of 1904 could never have developed.

That part of Thibet which counts in the frontier problem does not actually adjoin British territory, being separated therefrom by the native states of Nepal, Bhutan, and Sikhim, each of which in varying degrees is subject to our influence. The absence of proximity, however, detracts but little from the importance of Thibet's political attitude towards India. As students of Eastern affairs know, Lhasa is the nerve-centre of the religious life of a great part of Central Asia. The Buddhism professed in the Himalayan states mentioned above was known to be a somewhat degraded perversion of the original tenets of this once in India, and

in other parts of the world still, great faith. During the visit of the expedition to Lhasa it was found, as was long suspected, that the Buddhism of Thibet itself was no purer or higher than that practised in adjoining countries. From this it has been deduced that the influence of Thibet over its neighbours is less than was imagined, which, if admitted, would materially diminish the importance of Thibet as a factor in the frontier problem.

But there are in the history of mankind innumerable proofs that illogicalness and a low ethical standard are no bar to the spread of a faith and the maintenance of its influence. What is essential is that a belief should suit the temperament of a people, and that its practice should be compatible with their environment. The Buddhism of the Himalayas to-day is merely the Buddhism of India a thousand years ago, pruned and subverted to fulfil the religious requirements of people lower in the intellectual scale than were its originators. Because the lamaic version is puerile and preposterous, and because its upholders have been worsted in the, to them, foreign and abhorrent game of war, are no reasons for assuming that Thibet is a lesser influence than was supposed.

Indeed there are grounds for believing that Thibetan example and precept are as important to Himalayan Buddhism as they ever were. Evidence of this is to be found in the extreme veneration accorded by Buddhists to the Tashi Lama when he passed through Sikhim, and during his stay in India. Thibet has ever been a name to conjure with from one end of the Himalayas to the other, as the holy terror of hill coolies of all denominations showed when they were employed with the expedition to enter the sacred territory. Nor is there a particle of evidence to prove that the fame of Thibet has diminished because Lhasa has been violated.

Granting the moral ascendancy of Thibet in Central

Asia, there next arises the question of the countries in which her influence might be exerted to the detriment of British prestige. Sikkim, the smallest and least important, may be dismissed without discussion, for though nominally independent, it is completely under our thumb. Bhutan, on the other hand, has jealously held aloof from us until quite recently. We have no agent in the country, nor are Europeans allowed to enter without express permission. Our treaty precludes the Rajah from entering into relations with foreign countries, beyond which he owes us little obligation. Fortunately Bhutan, though bordering on our frontier for nearly three hundred miles, is poor in population and resources, and is totally devoid of military organisation. Still, the people are manly and independent, and gave us much trouble in the past by their truculence and marauding propensities. It is, of course, a substantial guarantee for their future behaviour that the present *de facto* ruler has visited Calcutta and professes himself extremely friendly and anxious for the maintenance of cordial relations. And while our strength remains evident—it was effectually demonstrated to the Bhutanese by our invasion of Thibet—there is little probability of a change in his attitude towards us.

Nepal, the most important state owing a degree of religious allegiance to Thibet, is a much more serious factor in the situation. The resources of a country which maintains a standing army of 33,000 men, and is capable of placing 90,000 in the field, are obviously great enough to constitute a real menace to our position in India were they ever employed against us. Our native army contains no less than 20,000 Gurkhas, and annually recruits 3000 men from Nepal. Of the present loyalty of the Gurkhas there can be no shadow of doubt. Again and again their devotion to the Crown has been proved, and under none but the most extraordinary circumstances can

it be conceived that they would turn their hand against us. Yet civil war has been known to occur, and strife has arisen between peoples more closely allied than we are with Nepal. And while our present relations with the Nepalese border upon the ideal, there can be no advantage in evading recognition of the fact that alteration in the *status quo* would be a severe blow to our army would completely alter the aspect of the frontier problem and necessitate an entire recasting of the measures for the defence of India. Happy then though we are in our friendship with Nepal, it can never be overlooked that there exists between it and Thibet the strong bond of a common belief, and that the policy of the Lama hierarchy will always be liable to influence that of their religious adherent. The present *régime* in Nepal is Hindu, and the rulers pride themselves on their Rajput descent. But while it is recognised that Brahminism has made great strides in recent years, it is impossible to ignore the fact that Buddhism is the traditional religion of the people. These, again, are of inflammable temperament, and prone to revolution, as their history proves. Nepal, through Thibet, is still the nominal vassal of China, and Thibet continues to be held in great veneration by all classes and creeds. Nor must it be forgotten that all the three states under discussion are largely inhabited by people of direct Thibetan descent, who retain intact the dress, language, and customs of the country their fathers came from.

Present times are kaleidoscopic in their changes. A Buddhist Japan has upset the hitherto unshakable belief in the supremacy of European nations. A Buddhist and renascent China is rebelling against the dominance of Europe, and all Asia has begun to speculate upon the possibility of standing firm against the inroads of the West. Should China in the near future work out the destiny that has been freely predicted for

her, would we feel happy in the knowledge that her co-religionist and vassal across our border was independent of our influence and free from our surveillance? Buddhism is a power in Asia to-day, and is like to be a greater power to-morrow. Thibetan Buddhism, including that of Nepal, Bhutan, and Sikhim, is not quite the same as that professed in the Far East. But the principles are the same, and the practice approximates sufficiently to form a bond of sympathy that circumstances might easily strengthen. A *jehad* is among the favourite institutions of Asia, and the Chinese have shown themselves as susceptible of its charm as the nations of the Middle East. And while it is recognised that religious faith as a motive of human action is no longer the power it was, it remains that a common belief is a firm basis on which to coalesce for the attainment of a common object. If ever a Buddhist combination should be formed in Asia, its influence would be bound to be felt in the Himalayas, and, if aggressive, its efforts would certainly be directed towards the alienation of the states on our Indian border.

The possibility of the establishment of Russian influence at Lhasa must also be considered. That relations of some kind exist at present between the deposed Dalai Lama and Russian agents is indisputable. An outcome of the present situation in Thibet may be the return of this dangerous personage to Lhasa, and the resumption of power by one who in the past coquetted with Russia, and who, until quite recently, was known to have obtained sanctuary in territory under Russian influence. It is imperative that the political horizon of the three states actually on our border should be limited to British surroundings. In that horizon there would be a break were it known that Russian counsels possessed weight in Lhasa.

To guard against possible contingencies requires only

the maintenance of British influence and prestige in the religious capital of Central Asia. With Nepal friendly, positive military aggression is out of the question, and must remain so while nature's barricades exist and armies are unable to fly. Thibet is absolutely impassable to a Russian army, though a squadron of Cossacks might easily get to Lhasa. In this part of the world we need take no defensive measures. All that is necessary is that a flank, splendidly endowed by nature, should be picqueted. Aware that surprise is impossible, no enemy can then arise where his efforts would be wasted.

Yet we are pledged to abstain from establishing a representative in Lhasa, or even in Thibet. Certainly the Trade Agent posted by treaty at Gyantse may keep eyes and ears open. But the nature of his appointment detracts from his position and influence in the country, and he lives off the main trade route, and at a place of only secondary consequence. In securing the friendship of the Tashi Lama we have made some effort to atone for the mistake of allowing Lhasa completely to get rid of us. But Shigatse and Lhasa have always been more or less at daggers drawn, and the influence of the Tashi Lama is confined to his own country. Only in the event of his assumption of the rulership will his friendship become of first importance to us.

It is well understood that if the Indian Government had had a free hand in determining the course of the negotiations at Lhasa in the autumn of 1904, the situation to-day would be more satisfactory. But the home Government were already committed to a policy which entailed sacrifice of what was most desirable from the Indian point of view. That a local government should frequently be disappointed in the decisions of a supreme government, guided by the wider considerations of imperial policy, is in the nature of things, and reflects no blame on either side. But it is very possible that

the supreme government may not have assigned to any particular problem of local government a sufficiently important place in the scale of questions which must continually confront them from all parts of the world.

It would appear that the home estimate of the Thibetan question might be so characterised. Now that we have fuller information with regard to Thibet, it may be that the Imperial Government realises that a mistake has been made, and that it would have been well if Indian wishes in regard to the establishment of a resident at Lhasa had been more carefully considered before Lord Lansdowne gave assurances to Russia. But the molecules of international politics are in perpetual motion, and opportunities continually occur for bargaining in concessions and for the cancelling of pledges.

We want no more expeditions over the Himalayan passes; we covet no portion of Thibetan territory; nor have we the slightest desire to interfere with the internal affairs of the country. But we do want to make sure that nobody else shall gain any ascendancy which might be reflected among the Himalayan states. To guard effectually against this we only need a sentry at Lhasa; and it may save us much expense and anxiety in the future if we avail ourselves of the first opportunity which offers to free ourselves from the obligation of doing without one.

Discussion of the commercial possibilities of Thibet must necessarily be preceded by a brief investigation of the conditions under which the people live, and a statement of the circumstances governing trade in the past.

The experiences of the Younghusband Expedition, as well as the many books which have dealt with Thibet in recent years, will have amply demonstrated the nature of the climate, and the fact that agriculture, beyond the provision of necessities for the inhabitants, is practically incapable of development. But nature

having provided immense expanses of country covered with rich and succulent, though scanty, grass, there is in this circumstance reason for believing that great expansion is possible in the production of commodities suitable for export. And a glance at the map shows that the most profitable outlet for an export trade is across the passes into Bengal.

Of the causes which hitherto have restricted the exportation of Thibetan productions there are two of leading importance. One is the fact that, despite treaties to the contrary, both Chinese and Thibetans have done everything possible to handicap trade with India, particularly at that point where the products of the rich Tsangpo Valley find a natural outlet to the plains of Bengal. The other is due to the social system of the country, which not only absorbs into the monasteries a great proportion of the male population, but inflicts on the remainder the burden of supporting swarms of monks whose economic value to the country is absolutely nil. Thus, with a large idle population consuming a great part of the produce, and the existence of an artificial check on the export of the surplus, it has been inevitable that foreign trade should languish and lack that elasticity which is characteristic of commerce in other countries in Asia.

It is curious to observe how trade difficulties have reacted upon the social system of Thibet and actually served to perpetuate it. It is a truism of human existence that one of man's chief instincts is the accumulation of wealth in some form or another. If the opportunity to attain riches is denied him, only then will his ambition be turned in other directions. In the valleys of the Tsangpo and its numerous tributaries are centred the agricultural resources of the country. These valleys are capable of producing a food-supply considerably in excess of the wants of the agriculturists, but owing to the weight of cereals and the expense of transport their exportation

is out of the question. In these circumstances the natural consequence would be the arising of a population devoted to trade and industry, obtaining bread from their agricultural brethren in exchange for the results of their work, and exporting to foreign countries the necessarily substantial surplus. But the check on export trade has deprived the people of the opportunity to make industry profitable, with the result that gravitation to the idle life of the monasteries has been made easy. And with the gradual increase in the numbers and influence of those devoting themselves to the professional practice of religion there has arisen a state of affairs in which it has become indispensable for the agriculturist to identify himself with the monastic system, or suffer from its cupidity.

Travelling in Thibet, one marvels to perceive so many houses in ruins, and so many valleys, once under cultivation, now totally uninhabited. Two or three hundred years ago the population of Thibet must have been far greater than it is to-day, and we know that the monastic system then was in its infancy. It is easy to understand that in those days the productive powers of the land and people were greatly in excess of requirements, thereby directly encouraging the institution of establishments conducted by idlers. Had industry, with the object of foreign export, been possible at that time, we should have seen the development of trade, and the arising of a class of wealthy merchants instead of the growth of property-owning monasteries which has taken place. But some hundreds of years ago commerce with outlying countries, unconnected by water, was practically unknown. And by the time industrialism in Europe had forced the opening of distant and difficult markets, the lamaic system had obtained on Thibet an octopus-like grip that stifled all enterprise. Finally, we have the modern demand for outlet to commerce, which has so grievously upset Chinese social arrangements, impelling China to urge

upon her vassal the necessity for closing her doors to European inroad. This action of China, together with the apparent poverty of the country, has resulted in the isolation which has surrounded Thibet with so much mystery, and has practically cut her off from enjoying a share of the trade of India.

This interpretation of the origin and present condition of affairs in Thibet being conceded, it becomes obvious that for an expansion of trade quite disproportionate to past results but two things are needed, namely—internal resources; and unrestricted opportunities to trade, coupled with the natural concomitant of improved communications.

Three months' travel in Thibet has convinced me that there are in that country millions of acres under grass supporting at present not a tithe of the sheep and cattle which might thrive thereon. Observation to this effect has been made, be it noted, in the dead of winter, during the months of January, February, and March, when the temperature at night seldom or never registers higher than zero, and when it might be supposed that vegetation was barely able to retain life. In winter grass on the Thibetan plains is far from abundant, but what there is is extraordinarily nourishing, as witnessed by the fine condition of the yak and the juicy eating of the game one shoots. In summer these plains must be a positive paradise for cattle, a conclusion supported by the evidence of several recent travellers. Nor must it be forgotten that certain parts of Thibet are covered with herds of wild animals, which certainly do not inhabit places that fail to afford an easy living. The Tuna plain, on the trade route between India and Thibet, and one of the bleakest regions in the country, supports, in addition to many thousands of yak and sheep, immense numbers of wild ass and gazelle, besides quantities of small game. In other parts of Thibet, no less fertile than the Tuna

plain, there exists a similar amount of game. But because there is no trade route there are very few yak and sheep, though thousands might find nourishment.

The potentialities clearly are an immense increase in the supply of wool, and the establishment of a large trade in hides. Under present conditions the manual attendance indispensable to the management of herds of cattle and flocks of sheep is unprocurable owing to so large a proportion of the adult male population living idly in the monasteries, and because the remainder of the people are kept busy feeding themselves and the sloths. But here we come to the other essential to a development in trade, and to the consideration of the effect it must have on the people and their occupations.

The recent treaty with Thibet provides for the removal of all restrictions on trade between India and Thibet. Nor is it likely that in the future we will allow China or Thibet to disregard their obligations in the farcical manner of the past. When it has been realised in Thibet that every pound of wool has a substantial value on the frontier of India, there will be an immediate increase in the supply. And when it is further understood that there is no bar to export, and that the demand is continuous, there will immediately arise among Thibetans the inclination to make their sons into traders and cattle-breeders instead of monks. To-day every farmer in Thibet, like every ploughman in Scotland, must make one son a priest. But the humble Scot aims at the betterment of his family, while the Thibetan merely gives a hostage to a system which otherwise would grind him down to the uttermost farthing.

Nothing can be clearer than the consequences of a serious expansion of trade in Thibet. It means a blow to Lamaism, which will result not perhaps in its extinction, but in its relegation to a place in the social scheme more in consonance with economic requirements.

Harmless and innocent as the monastic system is on the whole, it is yet a dreadful incubus from the point of view of industrial Europe. Not only does it literally devour the land, but by the entailment of celibacy it prevents an exceedingly large proportion of the male inhabitants from propagating the race. The Thibetans are a virile and manly people, else they would not inhabit so rigorous a country. Natural law, in the shape of British demands for trade facilities, is stepping in again, and one cannot but foresee in the future a remarkable modification in the lot of the people. Doubtless a perception of the inevitable result of opening the country to trade has been responsible for maintenance of the policy of isolation to which the lamas of Lhasa have clung so tenaciously.

From practically nothing ten years ago, the total Indian trade with Thibet has gradually increased until, for 1904-5, we find it valued at £250,000, roughly one-half emanating from Gartok in the west, and the other half passing through Chumbi, the outlet for products of the Tsangpo basin. Owing to imperfect registration in earlier years the expansion cannot be so great as these figures would indicate; but it is undeniable that the construction of roads in the west, and the improvement of communications through Sikhim in the east, have led to important increase in both export and import trade. And this advance has been made in spite of the imposition of duties and of active opposition on the part of Chinese and Thibetan officials on the frontier. With the disappearance of that opposition and the abolition of duties, as provided for in the recent treaty, an immediate and substantial increase may be anticipated. The present abnormal price of wool in Europe should also prove a valuable stimulus to its export to India, at what might be termed a psychological moment in the commercial relations between the two countries.

It is satisfactory to know that though the Government of India has been disappointed in its desire to establish political relations with Thibet, there has been no relaxation in the steady and continuous efforts to improve communications. The most recent manifestation of this healthy spirit has been the survey of a new road into Thibet through the western confines of Bhutan, which state has agreed to the construction when one of two alternative routes has been decided upon. This road will cost undoubtedly a large sum, but, unless the ideas I have expressed are entirely falsified in the future, the money will be well expended, and should prove a material contribution to the causes likely to result in an expansion of trade. The new road will have the important qualification of always being open for transport, in contrast to the present Sikhim routes, which are liable throughout four months of the year to closure by snow. And as in reaching the Chumbi Valley it will cross no passes higher than 9000 feet, the expense of carrying will be substantially reduced. Nor must it be overlooked that the strategic value of a well-made and carefully graded road would alone justify considerable expenditure.

TRANS-HIMALAYAN INDIA.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE KULU VALLEY.

DURING my journey in Thibet I came to the conclusion that it would be impossible ever to rest content with knowing what, after all, is but a comparatively unimportant section of the Indian frontier. My companion having been a soldier, and one, moreover, whose position on the Commander-in-Chief's Staff generated a keen interest in the military concerns of India, it was natural that much of our conversation related to frontier problems. Following the movements of the Younghusband Expedition, comprehending the conditions under which it had to operate—so different from those prevailing in South Africa and Manchuria—and deducing therefrom the eternal lesson that war is as much concerned with Nature as with men and weapons, fired my ambition to know something of the physical and economic conditions of the other countries adjacent to India. We maintain in our great dependency an army of 220,000 men, three-quarters of which is organised for the defence of the North-West Frontier. I determined to see for myself what lay beyond our political borders, and what manner of task

confronted the enemy whose presence outside our gates entails so large an establishment and so much expensive and elaborate preparation.

So, having left behind the mountains of Thibet and Sikhim, I proceeded to Simla, where it was necessary to obtain Government permission to cross the frontier into Central Asia. The Foreign Office put no difficulties in my way, and was indeed kind enough to arrange with the Chinese Government to allow me to travel in Turkestan. Permission to enter Persia was easily settled with the Consul-General of that country in Bombay. But for the most important part of my contemplated journey—that through Russian Turkestan—I could obtain no assistance, and was obliged to start altogether without credentials, trusting that correspondence with London would result in a passport meeting me at Kashgar, the capital of Chinese Turkestan. It required no small amount of optimism to face a pilgrimage 1500 miles long, over the three highest ranges of mountains in the world, with the possibility that at the end I would be blocked, and forced to retrace my steps. But a deep and abiding faith in circumstances belongs to the Scottish temperament, and I would indeed have been a traitor to my kail if I had abandoned my plans through excess of caution.

On the twenty-fourth day of May I set forth from Simla, attended by two servants and a modest caravan consisting of four laden mules. At Mashobra Tunnel we were clear of the town, and here I discarded the pony I had ridden so far, intending thereafter to tramp it, for the body's sake and for the chastening of the spirit. It was a long walk to contemplate, and while I had every intention of stepping the whole 1500 miles, I confess to mental reservations. My good resolutions were highly tried at the beginning, for the hot and dusty ridges along which the road winds proved

most unpleasant walking. For many a mile there is nothing but stones, on one side avalanches of them streaming down into hot ravines, and on the other millions of cubic yards of them piled up into hills that must surely rattle flat at the next earthquake. But presently there comes a change in the scenery. Across one low pass there is a new world. Here are deodars clothing the hillsides, pine-needles strewing the road, green fields marking the slopes, while the smell of the firs gives joy to the nostrils. And now one walks in avenues of trees, listening for the cluck of jungle fowl and the whistle of blackbirds, tuning one's ear to the scream of a pheasant or the guggle of a tiny torrent that romps downhill. And so on the third day out one reaches Narkanda, 9000 feet above sea-level, and contemplates the deep dark gorge of the Sutlej overhung by precipitous mountains capped with snow.

From Narkanda to the Sutlej is about three miles as the crow flies, but owing to a drop of 6500 feet the road winds back and fore for fourteen miles. *En route* is Kumarsain, a village situated like an eagle's nest, and boasting the worst rest-house in Asia. The Rajah, who is supposed to harbour a loose tile—not to be wondered at on such a perch—was celebrating the birthday of his son and heir by a party, so I had to move on without making his acquaintance. It is a sore business going downhill, literally or metaphorically. When my little party reached the bottom the calves of our legs were just bunches of muscles and sinews that nothing could unravel. My old Mussulman bearer tried hot cocoa, lime-juice cordial, and cigarette-smoke without obtaining relief, and then gave it up as being the will of Shaitan.

From far above, the Sutlej looks an insignificant stream. But when one stands close by the roaring waters that career downhill in their narrow channel, one shudders at the fierce and lawless strength which they

exhibit. In these latter days of May the hot sun on the snows of the Thibetan boundary gives rise to innumerable torrents that all rush for the bed of the parent stream, and turn a reasonable river into a hell of grey surging water. The pace at which the current runs is tremendous. Huge billows plunge along and sometimes collide with each other, throwing columns of seething foam into the air. Massive trunks of trees are borne along with the speed of an express train, and tossed and twirled hither and thither like matches. Just below the bridge where we crossed, the river makes a sharp bend and the water races round a spur that projects from the inner bank. Here the stream makes a great swing to the outside, the water in the centre of the current surging along in a sloping bank the top of which is six feet higher than the slacker water under the spur. There is more water in the Niagara river, but for violence and impressiveness the Sutlej, swollen by the melting snows, is little inferior to the famous Rapids.

The price for a long descent is always a slow and toilsome effort to regain lost ground, and the 4000 feet of climbing which landed us at Dularsh is an episode to be wiped out of the mind. The rest bungalow at Dularsh is one of those oases which the Indian Government delights to establish for the weary traveller. From the verandah you look straight across to Kumarsain and Narkanda, the eye bridging the tremendous chasm wherein the Sutlej flows, and ranging over an immense expanse of mountainous land. Just to sit in that verandah brings peace to the soul. We were now in Kulu, the loveliest of Himalayan valleys, whose very name—Kulu—conjures up visions of wooded ravines and running water, green meadows and lazy cattle. But Kulu is a big country, and the main valley was some distance ahead.

There is still a range of mountains to traverse, and many passes, the highest of which, measuring 10,500 feet, bears the euphonious name of Jalaori. One day, while we were grinding up a slope of 2000 feet, there suddenly turned a corner two strapping natives carrying a litter. Two long thin bamboos stretched from one pair of shoulders to the other, and hanging in between was a cradle with a hood. Under the hood sat a round apple-cheeked baby with yellow hair and deep-blue eyes. The coolies stopped and I stopped, and the baby and I gazed raptly at each other, until a man in a topee came along and gave me greeting. While he talked I was studying the little soul in the cradle—eighteen months, and a girl, and the living incarnation of a cherub! At first I thought the man was a missionary, but from the words he used in referring to troublesome natives I concluded that he could hardly belong to an evangelical profession. Then more family came along, mother and daughters, and they all talked to me at once. They hadn't seen a European for weeks.

It was a happy meeting, for they were kindred spirits. They had begun at Simla, like myself, with a train of mules carrying tents, camp-beds, stores, and the usual paraphernalia of travellers in the wilderness. They had gone straight into the hills for a week, and then camped on the slope of a mountain, to the joy of their souls and the glorification of their complexions. They were now returning to civilisation, and bewailing the necessity. The father walked, the baby was carried like a little princess, and mother and daughters rode—not on sleek-skinned Arabian steeds, but on pack-mules and pack-saddles. No habits, no pommels, just short skirts and the natural way of sitting a horse, which is a leg on each side. The ladies wore their hair down, in long ringlets in which were entwined the lovely wild-flowers of the country. They had goats marching with them

to supply milk, which reminds me that while I was drinking in the whole family with envy and appreciation, the father told me of an adventure with a leopard that walked into the camp one night and tried to carry off something. He showed me the mark of the brute's teeth on the neck, but I can't remember now whether it was on the baby or on one of the goats. Anyway, they had enjoyed themselves completely. So easy, so cheap, and so delightful a way of making holiday is surely worthy of emulation.

Then we crossed the Jalaori Pass, which afforded a wonderful view of snow-capped mountains and forest-clad hills, and dropped down into the bed of the Beas river, the second of the five famous rivers of the Punjab to be negotiated. It was near the source of the Beas that I went fishing with an Aryan brother. He came provided with a net like a petticoat, weighted all round the bottom with marbles of lead. At the waist the net was gathered together on a rope, which the fisherman held while he tossed the petticoat into the river in such a manner that it spread out to its full extent, a circle of four to seven feet according to the skill of the throw. When the net lands on the water the weighted hem *sinks sharply to the bottom*, and if any fish happen to be underneath they are nabbed. In this fortuitous manner my friend secured seven fishes weighing seventeen ounces, and then retired with a bonus of eight annas to the bosom of his family.

As we approached the Kulu Valley the mountains closed in and forced the road into narrow gorges of great beauty and grandeur. Here are gigantic precipices, deep pools, and roaring waterfalls. The last chasm in the mountains through which the Beas tears like a cataract out of the main valley of Kulu is especially fine, there being what looks like a sheer drop of 3000 feet into the foaming water, while on either hand the

mountains tower to heights of 10,000 and 12,000 feet. Roads in these regions are precarious constructions, for the snow in winter ruins them, while the spring thaw causes landslips and avalanches of rock which sweep them away entirely.

At Bajaora is the residence of Colonel Rennick, and the location of the orchards famous throughout India for apples, pears, plums, and other fruit. No sooner had the Colonel heard that I was domiciled in the Dak Bungalow than he came to my rescue, and I soon found myself installed in his comfortable house surrounded by trees in full blossom. Unluckily I was too early for fresh fruit, but I took great liberties with apple-rings and dried pears, the preparation of which the Colonel undertakes in the latest and most scientific manner. I heard all about the inception of his orchards, which began at nothing and now cover some hundreds of acres of ground. Colonel Rennick knew naught of horticulture at the beginning, but by dint of earnest study of fruit-growing he has become an accomplished and successful fruit-farmer. Some of his experiments filled me with wonder, for, apparently, he has but to graft a French cutting upon a gooseberry-bush or a thistle to obtain the most beautiful apples and pears. Then he paints the trunks of his fruit-trees white, and tars other parts, generally interfering with the processes of nature.

Sultanpore is the capital of Kulu, and one of the most truly exquisite spots on the face of the earth. Out of the door of the Dak Bungalow there is a perfect lawn of green grass, in which are trees, singly and in avenues, that would grace a ducal park in England. From the edge of this broad lawn you look down a precipice to the river below, where are meadows with cattle, and smaller streams meandering in every direction. The bazaar begins at the foot of a deep ravine, through which roars a burn, crossed by picturesque bridges.

The narrow road between the shops is a stairway to the top of the ravine, and you step up it on great stone flags. Overhead are balconies that cross from side to side, and trees that add to the shade, constituting a picturesque and old-world scene that would be hard to rival. Up and down the river there is the most magnificent view. I was at Sultanpore on the 31st of May, when dwellers on the plains are gasping in the heat. Here the temperature was deliciously mild, and walking in the heat of the day perfectly comfortable, though the height above sea-level is only 4000 feet.

From Sultanpore to Nagar there are fourteen miles of perfect scenery and surroundings. Lanes and fields, brooks and rivers, are everywhere. Tremendous mountains tower on either side, and beautiful trees grace every feature of the landscape. At Nagar I was the guest of General Osborn, and spent two nights in his snug and picturesquely situated bungalow. The General, though no longer in his *premiere jeunesse*, is a great sportsman, and is able to gratify his tastes in the most enviable manner. He frequently shoots a bear before breakfast, for there is a nullah full of them immediately behind his house. During the day he can shoot pheasant, woodcock, and chuckor, and in the evening catch a basketful of trout in the Beas. All of those diversions are within easy walking distance. And if you like to climb, there are ibex galore. Truly the Kulu Valley is a corner of Paradise.

But this beautiful valley knows what trouble is. The earthquake which created so much damage in Kangra in 1905 was no less calamitous here. Twenty thousand people lost their lives in Kulu, and inestimable damage was done to property. Nearly every village is in ruins, and the signs of destruction are visible in every direction. The Kulu houses are built of loose stones, with a wooden framework on the top. On this a ceiling of

heavy flat stones is laid loosely. In the earthquake, which occurred in the early morning, these stones were shaken down on the unfortunate inmates, whole families being crushed like flies. Building operations are in full swing, and everybody has become a carpenter or a mason at unheard-of pay. Colonel Rennick's houses at both Bajaora and Nagar were badly wrecked, and members of his family narrowly escaped with their lives. Curiously, General Osborn's house, which is perched on an enormous rock fixed in the hillside, was absolutely unshaken, though, a hundred yards off, the pictures on Colonel Rennick's walls were swung outward and dashed back with their faces inward, while a grand piano was overturned.

At Nagar is Nagar Castle, an ancient residence of the Rajahs of Kulu, renovated to accommodate the Assistant Commissioner, who is responsible for the administration of an enormous district, including Kulu, Lahoul, Spiti, &c., comprising 60,000 square miles of territory. Mr Calvert has a busy and adventurous time of it, visiting the snow-bound and impenetrable recesses of his charge. And in selecting him to visit Gartok last summer in the interests of trade at this newly opened mart, the Government have appointed an official with much experience both of the kind of country and the kind of people who inhabit Western Thibet. Nagar Castle suffered but little in the earthquake, probably because the stonework is well cemented and intersected with enormous beams of wood supposed to be over a thousand years old.

Nowhere in India can there be scenery to match that between Nagar and Manalli. Take the most picturesque glen in bonnie Scotland, surround it with a towering ring of snow mountains, give it a clear blue sky and a few fleecy white clouds, and you will have conjured up something like the upper part of the valley of Kulu. Dropping down from Nagar to the bed of the Beas

river is a feast for the senses, for at every step one encounters something to attract the eye and please the imagination. Here a rustic bridge over a leaping torrent; there a grassy dell through which a tiny canal runs clear and joyous; a lane between an avenue of trees; and every now and then a glimpse of the panorama of lofty shining mountain, tree-covered slope, and silver river.

At Manalli there is still another attraction. Here lives Captain Banon, famous like Colonel Rennick for his fruit-growing, and his orchard in these days is one mass of black, ruby, and pink-and-white cherries. There cannot be less than fifty trees loaded with fruit, and to walk among them and sample the different kinds is a pastime for gods. Alas! that these delicious mouthfuls must perish for want of people to eat them. India is too far away for the transport of cherries, which do not stand travelling like more robust fruit. And so the birds have a continual feast, as well as Captain Banon's neighbours.

To Rahla is a repetition of the road to Manalli, except for 3000 feet of climb. Here I was disappointed to find that fowls, eggs, and milk were unprocurable, and that the only thing to be bought was a living sheep with a voice like the ram in Revelation. But at 9000 feet the air is champagne, and the view to the south glorious beyond words. Here is the take-off for the Rotang Pass. 13,500 feet is a moderate height to a Thibetan traveller, but to cross where lie the bones of two hundred men who perished in the pass some years ago is quite a new experience. It seems that the gut in the hills which constitutes the Rotang is used as a funnel by the whole of the mountain system to the north. The Kulu Valley warms the atmosphere, and up it goes. Then down comes the cold air from the snows of Lahoul in replacement. It all comes over the Rotang, and if human

beings happen to be there during the process they are transfixed by the cold.

To avoid this fate I started before daylight and made good a portion of the climb before the sun rose. By seven we were on the top and marching upon snow. Ponies or mules are impossible until the snow disappears, and I was now equipped with coolies—twelve rascals with weak hearts and no lungs, for by no other reason could I account for the frequency with which they rested. It was a busy morning in the pass, for a number of shepherds had been waiting their chance, and were now availing themselves of fine weather to lead their flocks across. Sheep and goats are pretty steady on their feet, and so their owners take them by the straightest road, which here meant over landslips and snowslides by a track just broad enough for one beast at a time. Involved in a flock, I found it impossible to get clear, and so was compelled to march for nearly an hour surrounded by the protests and lamentations of many times ninety and nine.

CHAPTER IX.

LAHOUL AND ZANSKAR.

LOOKING over into Lahoul from the Rotang Pass there is a wonderful view of glaciers, how many being within range of the eye it would be hard to say. Spiti, Lahoul, Chamba, and Zanskar are all countries where the mountains frequently attain the height of 20,000 feet, and snow-covered peaks soaring into the heavens surround on all sides the traveller standing on the Rotang Pass. Kulu and its beautiful green hillsides and ravines are forgotten in this new vista of ice and rock. Lahoul is practically treeless, and nothing but a wilderness of mountain-tops and rocky precipices greets the visitor who crosses its inhospitable boundary. A severe drop brings one to Koksar, a city of one house and a Government rest-bungalow. But here are thirty or forty tents containing wild people bound north or south, semi-nomads from Baltistan, Thibet, Spiti, and other wild and bleak regions. They are just civilised enough to send their children hunting for buksheesh, and retain just enough of native dignity not to do the importuning themselves. They are all hopelessly unwashed and tattered, but warm-looking and jolly. The clothing of the men is what you may see in any hill-station bordering on Thibet, while the women have divers methods of doing their hair and wearing their jewellery, which atones to some extent for the bagginess of their figures.

The human form is not idealised in hill countries, nor the human countenance either, judging by the appearance of the ladies. But the amount of turquoise, coral, jade, and other semi-precious stones in their headdresses gives them a social position relatively equal to that of their sisters in lands where physical beauty and mental charm constitute feminine attractiveness.

From Koksar one marches along a valley bounded on one side by a curtain of rock which I cannot but think must have no parallel in the world. At the bottom flows the Chandra river, known later in India as the Chenab, here a grey rushing cataract swollen by water from the melting ice. The level of the river is just under 10,000 feet, and from its bed rises a great rampart of rock that stretches up, and ever up, until at nearly 21,000 feet it ends in everlasting snow. From the top of the mountain to the bed of the Chenab is 10,500 feet of what looks almost sheer drop. The road runs along the opposite side of the valley, perhaps two thousand yards from this wonderful precipice, against which one might throw a stone and catch it on the rebound, so close does it appear. At Sissu we halt for the night under the shadow of this leviathan of nature, which hides itself in clouds towards evening and declines to be photographed. At Sissu there lives a Thakur of Lahoul whose idea of habitation is in harmony with his surroundings. The tower in which he lives, set on a hummock over against the stupendous battlements rising from the gorge of the river, is a triumph of architectural fitness, and a permanent tribute to the perceptions of his forefathers. The present poor gentleman is quite unconscious of the magnificence of his environment, and has done nothing for his tower but barely preserve it from ruin. But a thousand years back, when his ancestors were kings in Lahoul and the British Raj had not turned the hearts of native chiefs into water, some old freebooter

of the mountains was an artist as well as a warrior bold.

Kyelang is the capital of Lahoul, and is just a village perched on a slope that careful irrigation and cultivation has turned into an oasis amidst the rocky wastes wherein it is situated. A Moravian Mission has been established here for many years, to the material profit of the locality, but to little apparent advantage from a spiritual point of view. The people remain Hindu and Mussulman and Buddhist, and just go to the Padre Sahib for medicine, as they do in most places in India. A few converts make excellent woollen stockings, jerseys, and Balaclava caps for the chilly passes leading to Ladakh, and so, at a moderate price, some benefit does accrue to humanity. Nevertheless good example remains a powerful factor in human evolution, and who knows but that generations hence the good seed will bear fruit. But bodies bred in the snow nourish desperately hard hearts, and it is difficult to understand by what inversion of natural law shall a Buddhist by temperament ever come to desire Christian salvation.

Kyelang is a lonely place in winter. For many months the passes are closed and no post comes from India, nor is any communication with the outer world possible. Everywhere the snow is feet deep, and the inhabitants retire to their houses with food and firing, and never emerge until the drifts have melted from before their doors. Bears do this, and mice, and caterpillars, and many varieties of living organisms. Hibernation must be a great enemy to the development of soul, and it may be that the link running between mankind and his animal image may yet be discovered in countries where the cold compels inaction for half the year. That corner of the Himalayas where is Spiti, Lahoul, and kindred regions I commend to the researches of the anthropologist.

Beyond Kyelang is the Bara Lacha Pass, 16,500 feet, and impassable to horses in those days, so they told me. Therefore, if I am so wilful as not to stay in the metropolis of Lahoul for a month, I must provide me with coolies, and my coolies with coolies to carry food, and these coolies with more coolies to carry blankets and prayer-wheels and cooking-pots, and the devil only knows what else. Nine brawny rascals can easily carry all I have, but when we file out of Kyelang there are no less than eighteen sons of Shaitan bending their backs in my service and at my expense. They say that for three days firewood is non-existent, and that for nine days we shall be in the wilderness where nobody lives and supplies are unprocurable. When I protest at the number, they answer that otherwise they must die of cold and starvation, conclusive argument to the pudding-hearted Sahib.

After two days of the most melancholy progress, during which neither prayers nor prods had any lasting effect, we found ourselves camped in the loneliest ravine in Lahoul. This we had to penetrate for many miles in order to find an ice-bridge across a torrent, the proper bridge over which had been swept into the Punjab by a flood from the everlasting snows. At this point two native travellers walked into camp and said that they had intended to go to Ladakh by the Bara Lacha, but had found on approaching the pass that it could not be crossed because of the deep snow. Instantly I had eighteen kneeling figures crouched around me, their hands clasped in an attitude of despair and their eyes streaming with tears.

The end of it was that I was diverted from the Bara Lacha to another pass which these timid ones assured me was both easier and shorter. They told me the exact number of stages to Leh by the Shingo La, and said there was milk and honey at every stopping-place. They

hid three-quarters of their own supplies under a rock, and henceforth were willing to tramp like Trojans—if only the Sahib would not sacrifice their lives in the terrible Bara Lacha Pass. I was persuaded chiefly because the Shingo La is a route very little known, and because I should cross country in which few Europeans had travelled. I had my doubts about the shortness of the road, else why was not so easy and charming a way the recognised route to Ladakh? And ere long I was to have ample confirmation of my misgivings in regard to distance.

This change of plan was signalled by an immediate plunge into the mountains. We climbed up a terrible slope that seemed to lead nowhere but into eternal snow. And just when one felt assured that the coolies had lost their way, we came to a narrow gut which offered a passage through the range that hitherto had skirted the main valley. We camped that night at 15,000 feet, and the thermometer registered 5 degrees below zero, this in the month of June, and within a hundred miles almost of the hottest part of India. But here I shot my first ibex, whereby my recollections of that camp are pleasant. The coolies brought word that a small herd was feeding within sight of my tent, and from the door thereof I beheld seven of them about 1500 feet up. They were at the top of a big landslip, and feeding under a magnificent precipice. I got the Mauser out, and after a long and backsliding climb, reached within 300 yards of them. It was nearly dark, and even with the glasses I found it difficult to distinguish between male and female, or indeed to see what sort of heads they had. I selected one gentleman as being the best, and moved another 50 yards nearer, when the does began looking in my direction and edging nearer the bucks. So at 250 yards I took a shot, and missed, owing to the oil in the bolt being frozen and stiffening the trigger-pull. Fortunately

I lay tight, and after some hesitation the males began feeding again. This time the rifle was warm and the trigger responded at once, and over toppled the ibex, struck just below the wither. The steepness of the ascent will be realised when I explain that after being hit he rolled all the way down to my coolies, who were waiting at the bottom of the slope, a distance of nearly 1000 yards. As I expected, the head was a small one, measuring only 22 inches, and not worth taking away as a trophy. But I had fired more for the pot than anything else, and the eighteen coolies rejoiced that night in unlimited meat. Ibex is hard eating to my mind, but the kidneys are as fat and juicy as those of a South-down.

The Shingo, or Shinkal, Pass was an episode which will dwell in my memory after the manner of bitter aloes in the mouth. The coolies, brave of heart and strong of body in consequence of an overdose of ibex flesh, explained that it was an easy and short distance to the next halting-place, always provided that we started early in the morning. And to allow of the performance of so excellent a strategic move I ordered all the cooking paraphernalia to be packed up at night, that there might be no delay in the morning. By so doing I agreed to forgo breakfast, stipulating only that I might be provided with a *chupatti* for my pocket. Long before dawn I was aroused, with the thermometer showing 3 degrees below zero, and bundled off—no *chupatti* being forthcoming, owing to the forgetfulness of my cook, a Mussulman of great age, much piety, and very little sense. I calculated upon a four hours' march, and then a whacking breakfast to make up for omitted nourishment. Like most calculations, especially those made in high altitudes, it went agley, and my sufferings were as follows.

Whoso rises before the sun in a mountainous land,

where ice and snow bind the hilltops into long serrated battlements of gleaming white, discovers secrets of Nature that are never permitted to those who dwell in cities and sleep in bed until breakfast-time. Nor does it seem fair that those should tell of it who witness the mystic ceremonies with which broad day floods a region of glaciers. It is not playing the game with the showman when you explain to your friends what are the marvels behind his sixpenny curtain. The showman desires his customer just to stimulate the curiosity of the others by hinting at what there is to be seen, merely suggesting the strange and wondrous. And that is all I may do for the gentle reader; indeed all I am able to do, for it has not yet been given to mortal eyes to see, or brains to appreciate, all the miracles of light and shade and colour that happen when the red sun rises out of the east and paints the dim white canvas awaiting him.

Tramping over the crisp snow, to the rumble of sub-glacial torrents, we saw the transformation from beginning to end. At first all around was dead white, while high up on either side there were indefinable grey masses against skies of a depth of blue that was almost black. We were marching at 15,000 feet, and as the surrounding hills were over 20,000 feet high, their tops caught the light long before we did. One by one the peaks were lit up, like lighthouses when night approaches. First the light was rosy red, then it faded to pink that gradually waned to dazzling silver. From mere points there spread downward expanses of colour that ever broadened, rich and warm at the outset, pale and cold as their area increased. And so it became day.

While the sun tinted the hilltops from below the horizon we walked in fairyland, but when he rose up bright and hot, and flashed his rays from the dazzling snow into our eyes, we suffered the torments of the damned. We adopted spectacles of black and blue and green glass,

and toiled forward, up slopes that were never surmounted except to show others in front. The climbing was not very hard, and the snow was firm and comfortable to the feet. But when four hours had gone by and there still stretched in front of us a long unbroken ascent, one became painfully conscious of a labouring heart and the void in Little Mary. The aneroid kept registering its thousands, as telegraph-poles mark the advance of a train. One's head was swelling and burning, eyes and legs were aching, and lungs and heart felt like volcanoes within one's chest. After six and a half hours of interminable exertion we stood in the pass, and made vows for the future—never again to do such deeds. The aneroid said 18,700, which I knew was a lie, for the top of a known 20,000-footer near by looked a good 3000 feet above us. As we rested I ate snow by the cubic foot in the vain endeavour to quench thirst and satisfy the vacuum. The downward journey was easier, but the snow was slippery and the descent steep, and the fatigue engendered by those hours of toil was enough to turn a man into a jelly-fish.

A redeeming feature there was to that day's march. One long smooth stretch of snow ended in a little valley, perhaps 1000 feet down, at an angle of 45 degrees. My followers began zigzagging their way, floundering and stumbling in pitiable fashion. Inspired, I sat down with my alpenstock trailing behind. Gravity did the rest. At first it was merely a swoop, then it developed into a whizz, and after that balance and alpenstock became as naught. By grace this blessed career was ended head-first in a snow-drift. That thousand took me five seconds to descend, and perhaps fifty more were spent in shaking off the snow. The coolies took a solid hour getting down, so I was a great gainer in body and spirit—always barring the effects of illegitimate use on that part of the human frame designed by Providence for a

less exciting purpose. It was three in the morning when I started on an empty stomach, and it was just three in the afternoon when my breakfast appeared. Indeed you do pay a big price to see the Himalayas. But then one sees something worth seeing, something worthy of remembrance to the end of one's days.

Down at 14,000 feet we were clear of snow, and in a country of bare rock and glacial torrents. A village called Karjiak was our first sight of habitation after five days in the wilderness. Here we rested half a day, and made up for loss of sleep and recent short-commons. When we took the road it was with yaks, not the speediest of transport, but a great improvement on coolies. Thereafter we traversed a wild and desolate country, without trees or houses, and over tracks that wandered along the faces of precipices and upon the brinks of rushing cataracts. At this time we encountered the Zanskar river, one of the most tumultuous tributaries of the Indus. Zanskar itself is a province of Kashmir, and though containing 3000 square miles of territory, its population is no more than 2500, and the revenue but Rs. 2000. For seven months of the year it is absolutely closed to the outside world by snow, while inter-communication is impossible owing to the avalanches that continually plunge into the narrow valleys. And even after the greater part of the winter snow has melted, travelling is next door to impossible, owing to the furious torrents that race down every mountain-side and defy the courage of the boldest villager. In one deep ravine through which the Zanskar roars I looked up to the top of a precipice that towered into the air some 1500 feet, and beheld a sight that I had thought was confined to picture-books. Standing on a desperate ledge that seemed a mere protuberance on a smooth perpendicular wall was an ibex, clear against the sky. Ears, horns, legs, and tail were perfectly distinct, and the attitude exactly

as I have seen it drawn. Truly truth is stranger than fiction.

And now we arrived at Padam, once the capital of Zanskar, and still the location of a small fort. Here we strike a small community of Mahomedans, and for the first time since leaving Kyelang are able to communicate with the inhabitants of the country. From Padam we continue along the bank of the Zanskar to Zangla, which boasts a Rajah of great dignity and mighty few acres. This sportsman at nightfall sent round two watchmen to guard the camp. Having found universal honesty among these primitive hill people, I inquired why it was necessary to have protection, and was delighted to hear that the danger arose, not from covetous humanity, but from prowling wolves, who take what they can in the way of meat, and are not above making a snap at a sleeping man if nothing better offers. Bundling the watchmen out of camp, I caused a hind quarter of an ibex to be placed at the door of my tent. I then went to bed with a loaded rifle, the flap of the tent open so that I could command the ibex leg, and any beast that interfered with it. I kept awake for a good number of hours, and then fell asleep without having seen a sign of wolf. But the ibex meat was gone in the morning.

Then for the wilderness once more. And such a wilderness! For three days we were literally lost in the mountains, crossing each day passes measuring 16,000 feet, divided by gorges deep and gloomy. Though four ponies usually suffice to carry all the baggage, we were here compelled to have both coolies and yaks, ten of the former and six of the latter. It was only possible to move in the track of torrents, owing to the precipitous nature of the hills. These torrents had to be crossed and recrossed continually, impossible operations without the yaks, which are able to keep their feet where men would be swept away. Occasionally we were forced to leave a

river-bed and climb a precipice. At one such place I had to discard my alpenstock and use my hands to climb. Here the yaks were unloaded and the packs carried by the coolies. How the yaks scrambled up I cannot conceive, but they are certainly able to negotiate places that test the nerves and agility of human beings. At another place the gorge narrowed to a breadth of 10 feet, while 200 feet above the walls were so close that a man could step from one side to the other. This dark chasm was choked by a small glacier that offered a cold green front 10 feet high. In this we spent an hour cutting steps, after which we crept along upon the ice in a weird tunnel, through which the roar of the stream underneath reverberated like thunder. At the other end we had to plunge into the icy water up to our waists, and wade up the gulley until the banks shelved sufficiently to offer a foothold. After hours of this sort of thing there would be 3000 feet to climb, and then a descent to the original level.

At Nera we struck the Zaskar river again, within fifty miles of its confluence with the Indus, which occurs quite close to Leh. But of this distance thirty miles is a deep and impenetrable gorge which I was told no human being has ever entered. It is believed to be a long tortuous fissure in the mountains, flanked by immeasurable precipices, through which the river careers at a terrific pace. The discharge of the Zaskar river is equal in volume to that of the Indus at Leh, according to Cunningham's estimate, and so one can guess at the fury of its passage down this unknown defile. It was maddening to look at a map and see that our destination was a bare forty miles off, yet to know that we must travel over a hundred miles to reach Leh, crossing several lofty and difficult passes on the way. From Nera we drop 1500 feet, cross the Zaskar, and then rise 5500 to the Singa La, 16,600 feet above sea-level. The top of the pass is filled with

snow, presenting to the north a straight wall some 50 feet high, down which we had to cut a staircase. The day after, having dropped to 13,000, we are again compelled to climb, this time over the Sirsar Pass, 16,372 feet, finally ending at the village of Wanla, 10,900 feet. Thereafter the road to Leh is comparatively easy, and our troubles over for the time being. But we had walked over 400 miles, the last 200 over country wilder and more difficult perhaps than any in the Himalayas, or in the world for that matter. Sportsmen avoid Zanskar because of its inaccessible nature, and other travellers there are none. The Rajah at Zangla told me that in the last ten years only two Europeans had visited his valley, and that he himself had only left it once in his life, to pay a visit to Ladakh. Nine-tenths of the sparse population have never been out of their own district, and there is practically no trade whatever, each community supporting itself by the growing of grain and the breeding of cattle. It was to this unnatural country that our Kyelang coolies had committed us, probably out of ignorance. But if ever I return to Kyelang I shall visit some of the trouble upon a certain man whose appearance and conversation are firmly fixed upon my memory.

I had meant to walk from Simla to Leh, but the toil in Zanskar had knocked up the servants, and we rode the last fifty miles. Owing to the diversion from the Bara Lacha route, we had tramped nearly twice the distance, and had surely deserved to ride, for it must be remembered that marching at levels between 12,000 and 17,000 feet entails the expenditure of far more energy than at sea-level. At Lamayura we struck the main road between Srinagar and Leh; and a bungalow and fresh eggs and fowls and vegetables! Crossing the Indus we entered Ladakh, and two days later came to a halt at Leh, and thanked Heaven for delivery from evil.

CHAPTER X.

A PARADISE FOR WOMEN.

THE inhabitants of those parts of Lahoul and Zanskar which I have described, and of all Ladakh, are Buddhist, at one time owning the sway of Lhasa, and still under the influence of Thibet in religion, dress, and language. The altitude at which they live, and the cold and rigorous climate which afflicts them in winter, render them exceedingly like the Thibetan both in manner and temperament. And it is a problem for the biologist whether the power of Buddhism, as interpreted by the Lamas of Thibet, is due to inherent merit, or whether some such creed as that taught by the Lamas is not the consequence of rarefied atmosphere and extreme cold upon human temperament. There is, at any rate, a remarkable resemblance between the ideas and customs of the people of Thibet and those of the peoples that dwell on her borders, either in the north, east, south, or west. Polyandry is a feature of the country that interests most people, and that has been widely discussed. To what extent the polyandry of this part of the world resembles that obtaining in other Himalayan states I am unable to say, but the usage in Ladakh and its neighbourhood is so quaint and curious that I cannot but think some description of it will prove acceptable. In many books I have read dealing with the subject, I have encountered little more than a statement of the general

principle which allots one wife to a family of brothers. How they apportion the affections of the lady, what becomes of her children, and how she may break her bonds and contract new ones, are matters upon which most writers are silent. Inquiries on my own part, supplemented by notes made by Lieutenant Ramsay, Joint Commissioner at Leh in the 'eighties, have put me in possession of much that I imagine is not generally understood. While I do not claim for my information that it is worthy of being embossed in gold, or of study by savants, I believe it is true as far as it goes, and that it in no wise misrepresents the actual customs of Ladakh, and neighbouring regions where Buddhism is professed.

Betrothal, one may assume, marks the first expression of that instinct to which humanity owes its existence. In Europe and Asia we find that the period of life at which marriages are arranged differs materially, and that the whole subject is governed by different ideas. In the West inclination is controlled by the ability to support, failing which society condemns a man to celibacy. In the Orient, matrimony, in some degree or another, is deemed an essential of existence, and a duty to mankind which no law-abiding person can ignore. In Europe they marry when they can, but in Asia the first flush of adolescence is the signal for the joining of the sexes, and social conditions are such that obstacles rarely intervene. In Ladakh they adhere to the Oriental view, but temper it with an entirely admirable regard for expediency. A girl in Ladakh is usually married about the age of eighteen, though she has reached womanhood some years earlier. Going home to several husbands, who may treat her as no better than a slave, it is just as well that development, both mentally and physically, shall have reached such a stage as will enable her to deal with a difficult situation. Custom, again prompted by expediency, enjoins upon a man the marrying of a girl

of his own age, partly because he is not capable of doing a man's work before the age of eighteen or twenty, and partly because, if older, the wedding of a young wife would be to invite complications in a country where the marriage tie is not regarded as sacred.

Marriage ceremony there is practically none, for custom and not law rules the matrimonial relation. The bridegroom goes to fetch his bride, and finds her male relations guarding the house. After some palaver he appeases them and proceeds to enter, when he finds himself surrounded by a horde of angry females, who beat him with small sticks and abuse him unmercifully. Presents propitiate them, as they do bridesmaids in other countries, and then there follows feasting and music and dancing, at which the bride does not appear. At the end of the evening the bride is produced from concealment and is marched off by her husband to his own home, after which the couple are regarded as man and wife. This husband hereafter is always the leading factor, though his younger brothers have equal rights in the wife, in such degree as the lady likes to accord them. The earlier days of the honeymoon are regarded as the prerogative of the chief husband, and it is when the young wife is getting pretty sick of number one that custom recognises a suitable moment for the intervention of number two. In such demand does the lady find herself in the early days of matrimony that she speedily gains ascendancy, and thereafter rules her husbands and the family property with tact and the judgment engendered by responsibility. Matters are so arranged, it has been said, that one husband usually remains at home while the others go abroad on business. But as a matter of fact there is no such delicacy necessary in a Thibetan household, the lady bestowing her favour when and where she chooses in the most open manner. Among better-class people it is the custom to limit the number of brothers to one

wife to three, other brothers being expected to join a monastery, or make independent efforts to earn a living. But in lowlier circles all the brothers share in the wife, as they do in the family property.

Sometimes it happens that there is only one or two brothers in a family, and then it is the privilege of the wife, if she is not satisfied, to suggest the adoption of another brother and husband. If they can all agree to the individual, which as a rule there is no difficulty in doing, in he comes and joins the family circle as if he had been born to it. At other times it happens that the wife is not happy in her surroundings, and then she is liable to abscond and return to her parents. This generally leads to complications in regard to the price paid to the girl's father and to the clothes and goods she has brought to her husbands' house. As a rule the matter of divorce is amicably arranged, and the lady free to go home and contract a fresh alliance with a wealthier or better-tempered family. She has one opportunity of obtaining divorce on advantageous terms. At the death of the chief husband she may join herself to the corpse by a string, the severing of which denotes her desire to quit the family, which she does forthwith, taking all the property she brought with her, and making no return of the money originally paid to her father. If a woman has children she rarely leaves her home, for the children inherit to the exclusion of her other husbands, the brothers of the head of the family.

Incompatibility of temper is the chief excuse for separation, and if both parties are agreeable the matter is easily arranged. The brothers have no voice in the matter. Unfaithfulness on the part of the husbands is to be expected, and forms no ground for complaint. On the part of the wife it may be used as an excuse to get rid of her. But she must be caught *in flagrante delicto*, as circumstantial evidence is not admissible. This offence,

however, is regarded more as an infringement of private rights rather than a dishonour, and four or five rupees damages paid by the co-respondent will usually settle the matter. Where a divorce is arranged, children stay with the divorcee until about eight years old, when they return to their fathers, and in due course inherit the property. Divorced parties are free to marry again, the man indefinitely, the woman up to nine times, after which propriety enjoins widowhood.

Owing to the obligation of free labour to the state, one of the chief objects of matrimony is children. If they have no family to do the work required, parents must pay for substitutes, and so diminish the ancestral estate. Unfruitfulness, owing to the system of polyandry and the rigours of the climate, is not uncommon, and if the first wife has no issue the brothers may take unto themselves a second, and if necessary a third wife. Should children still not be forthcoming, custom enjoins the calling in of a *portak*, or fourth husband. If he fails they try one more husband and perhaps another wife, all which expedients failing in the desired result, adoption is resorted to. The senior husband and wife select from their respective families a marriageable boy and girl. Simultaneously with adoption the young pair are married. If in the fulness of time they are not rewarded with offspring, then the hand of God is deemed to lie heavily upon that household.

The lot of the younger sons of a family is frequently matter for commiseration. The one that takes to religion is far from being without compensation, though the somewhat divided joys of conjugal life are denied him. It is those who come so low down as fifth and sixth that are the sport of the gods, their future either poverty or affluence, the latter at the cost of liberty and individuality. It so happens in Ladakh that sometimes only girls are born into a family, and when this happens whole

æons of injustice to womanhood are rectified in the person of the eldest daughter. She is full and only heir to the family property, and if her father is a rich man, she is indeed a person to be envied. She never marries, yet she enjoys all the happiness of matrimony. She may have a hundred husbands, yet not one man in the world may call her to account. As childhood merges into womanhood her parents seek out a *makpo* for her, and all the spare men in the neighbourhood compete for the position. She takes exactly whom she chooses, and kicks him out in a week if she does not like him, in which case the law allows but a sheep as recompense.

At the age of twelve or thirteen the young heiress may have her *makpo*, whereas other girls must wait another five years for their husbands. The individual chosen, one of the aforesaid younger brothers, the girl's father proceeds to the *makpo*'s home and goes through all the performances of a bridegroom taking possession of his bride. After much festivity the blushing *makpo* is handed over, escorted to the house of his mistress, and there delivered into her custody. From that moment he is her husband in the eyes of Ladakh. For a week or so high honeymoon is held in the house of the father-in-law, and the *makpo* is put through his facings. Within his grasp is fortune, love, progeny, and position. Yet his portion is frequently no more than—the sheep. Let him falter in his duty for a moment, and out he goes to make way for one of the dozen others who aspire to his shoes. Needless to say, the wise youth recognises his position and curbs the Old Adam. Then he lives in clover, his children inherit their mother's property, and he himself is an object of consideration. A young heiress may have an unlimited number of *makpos*, one at a time, and if her fancy should wander from the *makpo* of the moment, who is there to find fault? One curious custom is that which deals with a male child left alone in the world

with property. A grown-up woman is chosen and married to him, to be the nurse of his youth and the wife of his manhood. And when he reaches maturity the nurse does not grumble if he takes another wife more suitable to his years. She, we may be sure, has not wasted her youth.

Death claims its victims in Ladakh as elsewhere, giving rise to joy or sorrow in a degree that does not differ greatly from that of the West. With a lower nervous organisation we find, of course, less capacity for emotion, and a philosophy that accepts the decrees of Fate and Fortune with greater equanimity. In a country where life is so hard, the Great Mower is compelled to confine his reaping to the extremes of youth and age. A child that survives is hardy, and likely to live until old age overtakes him. The middle-aged seldom die, for they have developed constitutions of iron. And so death is not the tragedy in Ladakh that it is in softer climes, it being best for all that a weakly child should go, and for an old person there is no advantage in lingering in the cold. Besides, death here is not death at all, but only change to another body, and one more step towards the serene eternity which is the hope of the colder temperament of the disciple of Buddha.

When death does come, it is least unwelcome in winter, when there is no work to be done in the fields, and when there is time and opportunity to make the best of the occasion. In Lahoul and Zaskar the snow lies so deeply that for six or seven months the inhabitants are completely confined to their houses. But as a village consists of a clump of huddled buildings, communicating with each other like a rabbit-warren, the hardship is not so great as might be imagined, while the situation positively lends itself to conviviality and good-fellowship. In Ladakh there is little snow on the ground, but the extreme cold and the frozen soil make agricultural work

impossible, and so the Ladakhi is like his southern neighbour, idle and ready to be amused. If a man dies in summer, his body must be disposed of on the third day; but if he elects to become deceased in winter, his relatives have no less than fifteen long days in which to weep and feast over the corpse. Immediately after the occurrence of the sad event the local abbot is sent for, and underlings according to the wealth of the family. The abbot begins the ceremonies by reading out of a sacred book, which he holds in one hand, while with the other he grasps the hair of the corpse. He reads for half an hour, all the while jerking at the head of the deceased. If there is blood at the nose of the body by the time the reading is finished, it shows that the dead person has attained Nirvana, whereat the relatives rejoice. But failing blood, it is assumed that the spirit of the dead is wandering about in space awaiting re-embodiment. Rescue can only be effected by payment to the lamas, who will then pray vigorously for the departed. Needless to say the blood is seldom forthcoming, and much prayer and payment the usual portion of the broken-hearted relatives. The reading completed, attendants come with ropes and tie the corpse in a sitting posture, hands, knees, and neck bound closely together. If the corpse has stiffened and the operation is impossible, the bones are broken. Thereafter the body is wrapped in cloth and placed in a room to which only the lamas are allowed access. The holy men watch day and night, pray continually, keep lamps alight, and offer food to the deceased. At a propitious moment the body is placed in a coffin and carried to the burning-ground, where it is slowly roasted until, in three or four hours, a bone drops away. The burning of the body continues until complete, but the important thing is the bone, which is taken home by the lamas, pounded up with clay into a paste, and then fashioned into a little image. The burial of the

image according to the means of the deceased, and the last of a series of feasts, then ends the funeral ceremonies.

The lama who figures at these functions is a person upon whom much abuse has been showered. A celibate, he has been accused of ignoring his vows and devoting himself to the world, the flesh, and the devil. But that is a libel pure and simple—so far as Ladakh is concerned. In this part of the world there appear to be two distinct sorts of monasteries. One class of monk is allowed to take a nun to wife and to rear up children, but the other may not look at a woman, to take food from her hand even being an offence which entails a beating and ejection from the monastery. That the stricter monk adheres to his principles on the whole there can be no doubt. Backsliders exist in every community, and it would be absurd to suppose that purity of life is never departed from. But that it is set up as a standard and eagerly striven after, the people themselves thoroughly believe. While the lamas of the stricter kind live an austere and simple life, they are yet men of the world, with a keen eye to business and the honour and glory of their monastery. They spend nothing on themselves, but they will go through fire and water to augment the resources of the institution to which they have devoted their lives. The gompas, or monasteries, is usually a large landowner, paying revenue to the Kashmir State at a rate equivalent to one-sixth of that paid by the ordinary land-holder. This advantageous assessment was secured by judicious bribery of the settlement officers, and by the concealment of the existence of cultivated land. Further, the lama has manœuvred himself out of the obligation of forced labour, and has imbued the villager with the belief that merit is to be acquired by the free cultivation of fields belonging to a monastery.

A nun is a person of little consequence in this part of

the world. She takes the veil for the same reason that a younger son takes it—because there is nothing else for her to do. In summer she lives with her people and slaves in the fields, and in winter, when there is rest and recreation at home, she has to return to her nunnery and devotional exercises. Perhaps her character is not all it might be from our point of view, but where the illegitimate exercise of the maternal function is regarded as merely venial, what else can be expected from her?

These dwellers among the hill-tops are simple, timorous, and kindly. Physically powerful, they are of a peaceful disposition, and fighting among them is unknown. Off the trade-route to Central Asia, where outsiders of lawless and turbulent character frequently intrude, there are no police, no courts, and no law. There is food and clothing for everybody, and little ambition for anything more. There are no paupers, for weaklings die in childhood, and strong men can always obtain food. If money comes the way of a Ladakhi, he spends it in feasting his neighbours. If a profitable outlet for trade presents itself, he lets the wily Kashmiri snatch it. If you punch his head he roars with laughter, and if he is caught in a snowstorm in a lofty pass, he will toil along with his heavy load uncomplainingly. This latter characteristic, however, refers only to the inhabitants of Spiti, Lahoul, and Zaskar, for the Ladakhi seldom does coolie work. At the end of his day's work he invariably begs for buksheesh—and a cigarette will content him. Thieving is unknown in Ladakh, and your money and your goods may lie open day and night. The Ladakhi is a great swiller of beer, and his joy is to get drunk every night. In his cups he is merry and good-natured, and would not hurt a fly. His liquor is *chang*, a weak fermentation of barley or other grains. There is no harm in it, and precious little intoxication. The effect on the drinker is

due not to the strength of the drink, but to the weak head of the drinker. He is a cheerful and happy individual, always gossiping when in company, and always singing lustily when at work in his fields, though that is not often, for the farm is mainly the province of the women.

CHAPTER XI.

LEH.

PHYSICALLY Leh has no rival in the world. Lying at a height of 11,500 feet, it boasts an atmosphere rarer than that of any other capital city. Its inaccessibility is incomparable, for it is three weeks' march from the nearest railway, fourteen days of which are along roads impassable to wheeled traffic, and which are completely blocked by snow for half the year. This path meanders across ranges of mountains, across deep valleys, and along riverbeds that long centuries of erosion have carved out of the heart of the mountains. And when the traveller reaches the neighbourhood of Leh, he finds himself in a wilderness of hill, precipice, and boulder-strewn sand that has to be seen to be understood. A solid range of snow-clad mountains bounds the southern view, and a similar range on the north holds Leh within a hollow. Between the two ranges flows the Indus river, a fierce cataract in summer, mostly tearing its way through deep chasms in the primeval rock, but occasionally permitting itself to be seen in the open, when it careers across huge rocks and stones in foaming billows of dirty grey. North of the river is sandy plain dotted with masses of dark crumbling rock that frequently rise to heights of several hundreds of feet, and look like islands on a yellow lake. One of these rocks is surmounted by a magnificent building, whose tremendous steep walls are pierced by innumer-

able windows, and whose battlements look down upon a broad streak of green that lies immediately below. This is the ancient castle of the Gyalpos of Ladakh, and the trees nestling at its foundations hide the town of Leh.

Riding along an interminable sandy path, one slowly approaches the oasis that marks the existence of Leh. First, there are a few scattered houses framed in little green fields. Then there is the rocky bed of a tumbling burn, spanned by a rustic bridge. And then a narrow lane flanked by high stone walls and shaded by a few willow-trees. In the lane is a cluster of mud-houses, which one is about to pass when a gateway and a vista beyond suddenly catch the eye. You turn your horse's head, kick him up to the gate and look through. Inside is the town of Leh, unique in appearance, quaint and picturesque beyond anything conceivable, and majestic because of the towering walls that frown down upon it. A broad street runs right up to the foot of the rock, and thereafter terrace upon terrace of houses rise one above the other until the great curtain of wall denotes the foundations of the castle. Along one side of the street stands a row of prodigiously tall, slim, and perfectly straight poplars. Immediately behind the houses on the other side there is a high and solid backing of trees deeply laden with foliage. The houses are not much to look at, except perhaps those with the little carved balconies of Mahomedan architecture, and the Ladakhi dwellings that are embellished with heavy stone portals and lintels. But the exquisite grace of the perfectly proportioned poplars that sway slowly in the breeze, the mass of dark comforting green opposite, and the mighty, eye-compelling building that soars into the blue sky, make up a scene that for character or beauty could hardly be paralleled.

The population of Leh varies between 3000 and 7000 people, according to the time of year. In summer it

is crowded with Indian and Kashmir merchants bringing goods for dispatch to the north, and with Central Asian traders who have brought the products of Kashgar, Yarkand, and Khotan to exchange for Indian merchandise. When business is at its height the bazaar is crowded with people who talk with the volubility of travellers after a long and tedious journey. Clothes of different cut and diversified hue add strangeness and colour to a scene that is entirely reminiscent of the 'Arabian Nights.' The merchant from Yarkand is a personage straight from the pages that immortalise the bazaars of Middle Asia, and his servant is own brother to the loiterers with whom Haroun-al-Raschid rubbed shoulders in the Imperial city of Baghdad. The strange headdresses of the Ladakhi women, the long streaming hair of the natives of Baltistan, and the wild, shaggy, sheepskin-clad wanderers from the west of Thibet are other elements that transfix the attention, and help to make Leh one of the strange places of the earth.

There are just about a hundred of the poplars ranged along the street, as if they were soldiers keeping order among the crowds that surge at their feet. At the ground they measure perhaps 18 inches in diameter, whereafter they taper up to a delicate point that bends and swings with the wind 150 feet above the roadway. For a long way up they are as clean and smooth as the mast of a ship, and then they break out into little branches of leaves that might be bouquets nailed to the trunk. Some of the poplars have leafy branches that point upward like besoms set on end, but both varieties are the embodiment of grace and delicacy. How they stand the high wind that occasionally sweeps over these mountainous regions is an unsolvable mystery. In 1890 Lord Dunmore photographed this street, and the reproduction in his book shows that the poplars were then totally non-existent. That they should have

reached their present dimensions within a period of sixteen years seems almost incredible. Sometimes the poplars look down upon a holiday, when the street below is devoted to polo, dancing, and feats of horsemanship, while the town band yells defiance and the crowds applaud.

A game of polo is composed of all the sportsmen who like to join. The goals are fixed at either end of the street, and the players station themselves where it seems to them best. The roadway cleared, the onlookers all settled in the doorways, balconies, and upon the roofs of the houses, there enters at one end a little company of horsemen. These walk peacefully down the street until the report of a gun galvanises them into life, and they break into a fierce gallop. At the half-way mark the man in the centre of the bunch of tearing figures tosses a ball into the air, and as it descends hits it an all-sounding whack with a club that sends it spinning down the road, followed by an avalanche of pounding hooves. From the opposing goal-posts an individual darts out, and at, the leaping ball, his charge taking him slap into the coming rush, and to what appears to be certain death. But he emerges yelling, riding like a madman, and brandishing his club—and with the ball describing parabolas in front of him. The State Compounder! if you please, and the fat Post Office Baboo at his heels, roaring like a bull and backing up like a Blucher. Hither and thither the players surge, the ball speeding up and down, cannoning from side to side of the street, and sometimes landing in a crowd of women perched on a house-top. After every goal the band breaks into pæans that mingle with the plaudits of the people. A brief rest, and they come pounding down the street again. Everybody holds their breath while the ball is tossed up and is dropping to meet the unerring aim of the club that sends it flying. Helter-skelter follow the excited players! Out darts the Compounder! The Post

Office charges! The Yarkandi merchant saves! The Zemindar from up the road gains the ball! The Serai Manager takes it from him, and the Tehsildar strikes a goal with a blow from his club that sounds like the crack of doom! Phew! 'Tis both hot and fast, is polo at Leh. Afterwards a batch of Ladakhi women do a heavy dance, some Baltis squirm to music, and an ancient warrior swings two swords without cutting himself. Then a man comes tearing down the street at full gallop, firing a gun as he goes. Another comes careering along in a bent attitude, out of which his legs slowly rise into the air, the while balance is maintained by grasp of the stirrups. Then the bandsmen eclipse themselves, and the Sahibs climb down from their balcony, and the show is ended—barring the distribution of buksheesh.

From time immemorial Leh has been a link between India and Central Asia. Down to present times commerce has continued without interruption, middle age history and literature proving that its existence was well known both in India and Turkestan. In these days, however, the Russian penetration of Central Asia has endangered the old-established connection, and it is possible that a few decades will witness its disappearance. The extension of the Trans-Caspian railway to Andijan has further threatened the commerce with India, and with certain parts of Central Asia trade either languishes or has ceased entirely. Kashgar, for instance, is only eighteen days' march from the Russian railhead, but double that distance from Leh. Yarkand is a week's journey farther east from the new Russian centre, and so much nearer India. Khotan, again, is practically equidistant as regards the number of marches, though the expense of transport to Leh must be considerably heavier than to Andijan. According to the relative positions of these places, as regards British and Russian centres, has trade been affected, Kashgar, the farther, showing diminution, Khotan, the nearer,

maintaining the old figures to some extent. But it must not be forgotten that Leh is far from being either the ultimate destination of Central Asian trade or a centre of Indian commerce. It is merely a convenient forwarding point, distant twenty days' march from India proper, and so not to be regarded as an economic centre such as the existence of a railway terminus makes Andijan. In fact, the Russians have an immense advantage over us as regards Central Asian trade, and every day must tend to make that advantage clearer to the conservative merchants who still make use of the expensive and laborious route through Ladakh. The most we can hope for is gradual as opposed to a sudden cessation of the trade, which would have disastrous effect upon established interests all along the road. It is unlikely that commerce will cease altogether, for certain products of each country will continue in demand in the other, and the circular journey through Bombay, the Black Sea, and the Russian railway will hardly prove cheaper than the present route. What must inevitably disappear is the export trade in such British and Indian goods as Russia is able to imitate, or upon the manufacture of which she is about to embark.

It is obvious that the presence of an aggressive European Power in Central Asia should bring home to the Indian Government the desirability of clinging to what remains of British connection with that part of the world. Another Russian advance in Turkestan is one of the accepted probabilities of political development in Asia; and Kashgaria lies upon the line of least resistance. Chinese Turkestan is probably not worth the cost of annexation, but Russian eyes in Central Asia search more for strategic than commercial advantage. While China remains in occupation of those regions beyond the northern boundary of Kashmir, British opportunities for trade will be equal to those of any other country, British prestige and influence will remain unimpaired, and we

shall continue in a position whence we can conveniently watch the doings of our great rival. The trade concerned is small and incapable of development, but its total loss would be unfortunate in that it might involve the giving up of our post of observation at Kashgar. Indeed it is hardly too much to say that our present strategic invulnerability in this section of our Indian frontier is dependent on the continuance of the ancient commercial relations with Central Asia.

Alive to the situation, then, the Indian Government has taken various steps to foster and encourage the trade which passes through Leh. Money has been spent upon roads, and caravanserais have been built for the convenience and free accommodation of the merchants who use the route. Supply depots have been established where good food for man and horse can be purchased at the lowest possible rates, while prices for hire of transport have been fixed at rates which protect the merchant from overcharge. While thus endeavouring to facilitate Central Asian trade, the Indian Government were confronted with a dilemma from which the only possible escape was through measures that tended to render their efforts nugatory. Nearly one-third of the imports from over the border consist of *charas*, a variety of hemp highly popular in the Punjab as a narcotic. This valuable commodity, subject to a duty of about 100 per cent, went far to pay for the exports, and any diminution in the quantity brought to India would inevitably affect the purchasing powers of the Yarkandi merchant. Some years ago the Hemp Drugs Commission declared that *charas* was doing much harm to the people of the Punjab, and advocated abolition of the traffic. Government then decided to increase the duty from 100 to 400 per cent, with the object of rendering the drug too expensive for consumption. Three years' notice of the increase expired last year, and the only effect so far has been an accumulation of stock which, in bond, is

cheaper than ever. But this year's importation of *charas* is much lower, and the import probably will be still lower in future, with the result that Yarkandi merchants hereafter will have a smaller amount of money to spend in India. Thus the vicious tendencies of the Punjabi have been checked by legislation, and we are left wondering whether it is really the case that the finding of a Commission has improved human nature—or merely deflected its inherent wickedness into other channels.

Present-day exports and imports average about Rs. 25,00,000 annually, nearly equally divided. In 1904-5 there were 10 lakhs of merchandise each way, plus an import of Russian gold to the extent of another 5 lakhs, due chiefly to indebtedness from the previous season.

Leh is also a connecting-link with Thibet in respect to trade, and particularly as a convenient starting-point for explorers. With Western Thibet there is commerce worth about 4 lakhs per annum, of which the principal item is the import of wool. But with the recent opening of the Chumbi Valley in Eastern Thibet there is a tendency to reduction in the quantity, which is likely to be accentuated in the future owing to the attractions of the eastern road, and because the Indian Government is making endeavours to develop the newly opened mart at Gartok, from which the nearest route to India is *via* Almora. But travellers continue to find Leh a suitable base for exploring expeditions, Bower in 1892, Wellby in 1896, Bruce in 1905, and Sven Hedin this year (1906), choosing it as the point at which to equip themselves prior to their journeys into Thibet. Many others have left Leh and crossed the border of Thibet, nourishing the vain hope of reaching the goal of nineteenth-century exploration—Lhasa. But none has succeeded, unless perhaps the hapless Moorcroft, whose fate to this day is wrapped in mystery.

CHAPTER XII.

KHARDUNG AND SASER PASSES.

LEH is a point in the journey of a traveller whereat he must harden his heart, or confess to an irresistible desire for return to the fleshpots. From here there lead two great roads, the one ending at Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir proper, that land of wood and water, milk and honey, sweet fruit and balmy climate which has been rightly termed the Eden of Asia; the other leading due north into the cold and inhospitable region of mountain and glacier that even in these days of enterprise and travel remains practically unknown. The road to Srinagar is the way back to India and to civilisation, but the northern road, after the transit of the lofty Karakoram system of mountains, debouches upon one of the most fascinating and remote corners of the earth. Central Asia is a geographical expression of little meaning except to those few whose business it is to study the remoter borders of great empires, that encroachment may not happen or opportunity be lost. Yet who has not read of Bokhara, of Samarcand, of Yarkand?—those magic cities of the East that enthralled one's fancy when deep in the pages of the greatest story-book of all time. It is hard to believe even now that they are realities, and not part of the floating and mysterious world conjured up by the power of genii or the secret servants of the lamp of Aladdin. Does the reader remember

the pictures in that priceless volume—the tall turbans, the tarbooshes, the flowing robes, the grey beards, and the pointed curling shoes of those stately and dignified figures that rode upon caparisoned mules, or upon Arab steeds with arching necks and graceful tails? Such an very one came to me in Leh the other day and salaamed. Was not the Sahib going to Yarkand? And the Sahib said he was.

Behind Leh there is a mass of mountains, brown in the nearer spurs, purple in the farther heights, and streaked with white along the broken ridge that denotes the backbone of the range. In this ridge there is a suggestion of a dip, and in the dip a little knob. An afternoon's walk it looks, and a climb of perhaps 2000 feet. But the huge rock which the knob is in reality marks the Khardung Pass, nigh 18,000 feet high, the first of many obstacles that bar the way to the north. To negotiate this barrier it is necessary to resort to the faithful yak, a brute of much patience, great docility, and good wind. A day of toil and the foot of the pass is gained. A night's rest and the taste of 20 degrees of frost precede a climb of 3000 feet, and the attainment of a height that is entirely inappropriate to human existence. But our adventures in Zanskar had hardened my servants, and they made no complaint either of head or stomach. Curious as to the possible effect of the altitude, despite recent experiences, I made the ascent on foot as fast as I was able, taking an hour and forty minutes for the 3000 feet. To my satisfaction the only result was a slight compression of the brain which hardly amounted to inconvenience. Horses are unable to carry a load up such a steep road in this altitude, and when crossing the Khardung unloaded they frequently bleed at the nose, and sometimes die. Even the yaks suffer considerably, and their skeletons are strewn about the top of the pass, testifying to the severity

of the road and the pluck with which they are endowed.

Looking backward over the valley of the Indus, there is a magnificent view of the mountains south of Leh. They lie in a long straight line dotted with peaks between 21,000 and 22,000 feet, and presenting no gap less than 20,000 feet in height. The snow-line at 18,000 feet is remarkably clear and well defined, the effect resembling a filmy white frieze coupling a huge purple wall and a ceiling of deep blue. Turning to the north the view is circumscribed by the nearer hills, and one has to be content with a less extensive outlook. Nevertheless the northern aspect of the Khardung is impressive. The pass consists of a knife-like ridge with a steep descent on either side. The southern front is faced with huge stones and boulders, among which the track threads its way, twisting hither and thither as it gradually works its way to the top. Here and there lie patches of snow that are fast disappearing before the warmth of the summer sun. Immediately over the edge of the ridge, however, one finds oneself upon a glacier that has encumbered the route to Central Asia as far back as records go. Fed from the snow that never leaves the northern slopes of the two low peaks closely flanking the pass, it forms a curtain clinging to the steep descent which cannot be avoided. The surface resembles the appearance of a city of churches, consisting of phalanxes of thin spires and steeples of ice from between which the snow has melted. These hollows are soft and treacherous, and many an exhausted animal laboriously picking his steps over the uneven surface plunges forward upon his chest, never again to recover footing. Under the pass the foothills close in and form a narrow ravine which affords the only possible means of advance. Right down into the ravine, at a fearfully steep angle, hangs the glacier, its foot marked by a

series of deep-blue frozen lakes that, far below, end in a silver thread of foaming water. Down this uncanny slope the patient yaks step warily, tacking backward and forward like ships in a head-wind. A batch of ponies in front are falling and floundering in woful fashion, though they are unencumbered by loads. One unhappy little beast drops both forefeet into a bad place, and makes exhausting but unavailing efforts to lever himself out by means of his elevated hindquarters. But his legs sink down under the strain, and then every man within call has to be enlisted in the task of hauling him out with ropes. Such exertions, at an altitude whereat the mere task of breathing necessitates violent heart and lung action, frequently cause the bursting of a blood-vessel, and sometimes result, literally, in a broken heart.

After eight weary hours of continuous marching we reach the village of Khardung, an oasis delightful to the eye after the barrenness of the long valley leading away from the pass. The significance of these oases in the desert must be hard of comprehension for those who live in surroundings that are eternally green. Their charm and beauty lie in the contrast which they present to their environment, and the relief they afford to senses numbed by the glare from rock and sand. No degree of cold or altitude seems to detract from the power of the sun's rays, which beat upon one from above and are reflected into one's eyes by every stone and every grain of sand. Solar hats and coloured glasses are useful in protecting the eyes, but the fact remains that the body is absorbing the rays at a thousand points and undergoing a nervous process that amounts to mild paralysis. The sun in reasonable degree, as it is experienced in countries covered with vegetation, is an elixir of life, cleansing the blood and stimulating the faculties. But here those very qualities which make it desirable elsewhere operate

deleteriously on the human frame, because there is no intermediate absorbent, and because the traveller must endure the concentrated effect for far too long a period. Six or seven hours spent in such a glare as exists on a bright day in this wilderness literally reduces energy to the lowest point, and turns a human being into an uncomfortable mass of lassitude. Arrival at an oasis when in such a condition has an instantaneous effect, the sudden relief from the overpowering sun feeling like the falling away of a heavy burden.

The serai at Khardung is a big enclosure with a row of huts and stabling, behind which lies a small garden that irrigation has turned into a little paradise. The ground is covered with thick green grass, and spreading trees cast grateful shade. In one corner there is a wild-rose tree completely covered with wide open and brilliant carmine blossoms. In this restful haven my tent was pitched, the entrance under a willow-tree and fronting the blushing rosebush. Outside the serai lies a small cluster of curiously tumbled houses. To the uninitiated they would pass for a heap of stones, but when you know that the most desperate cold reigns here in winter, and that icy winds sweep the valley from end to end, you realise that these hidden dwellings are a triumph of snugness—in appearance. In reality a Ladakhi house is a chill and draughty dwelling, designed merely to keep off the wind, and not to keep out the cold. To defeat the temperature the people wear many layers of clothes, the innermost of which seldom see the light.

From Khardung we take ponies, and after an hour's march strike the valley of the Shyok river, the biggest of all the Ladakh streams, and the one which, many miles distant, joins the Indus, thereby conferring upon that river much of the importance which it enjoys. The valley of the Shyok is rather lower than that of the Indus at Leh, and it certainly boasts a milder climate,

for instead of the barren wastes of rock that skirt the latter, we find here a country almost covered with dense jungle. The valley averages rather more than two miles in width, and is commanded by mountains capped with eternal snow. From the snow flow innumerable torrents that streak the dark slopes with silver threads, each ornamenting a band of green vegetation engendered by the natural irrigation. Thus the valley of the Shyok presents an appearance much more picturesque than any other part of upper Ladakh. Indeed for scenery it would be hard to rival, for there is here combined the beauty of perpetual snow, the grandeur of towering precipices, and the charms of abundant vegetation. In the midst of the big flats covered with jungle, one every now and then enters upon a clearing where fields of the brightest emerald surround little white farm-houses embowered in trees. The road through the tiny village is probably shaded by trees, and romping burns and gurgling irrigation canals cross the way at twenty different points. The quantity of jungle has enabled each villager to surround his property with an impenetrable hedge of thorns, which not only protects the fields from the inroads of cattle and passers-by, but forms a barrier against the winter wind, and concentrates all the heat of summer upon the well-watered and fertile soil. Riding along the deep lanes formed by these hedges one catches glimpses of cottages surrounded by lawns of perfect grass, in which the babble of running water is never silent. The hedges are dotted with wild-rose trees, which in this lower altitude are now past their prime. But the masses of faded pink blossom and dim green leaves set in the brown of the thorn form a symphony in colour that completely contents one's æsthetic soul.

We now leave the Shyok to pursue its way through Baltistan, while we turn due north again, up the valley of the tributary Nubra, which rises in the glaciers that



Sikkim—Lepcha Man and Wife.



Sikkim Swing.



Bhutius—Three Generations.



Our baggage coolies crossing the Mafi La—see page 12.



Sikkim—Cane Bridge over the Teesta,—see page 10.



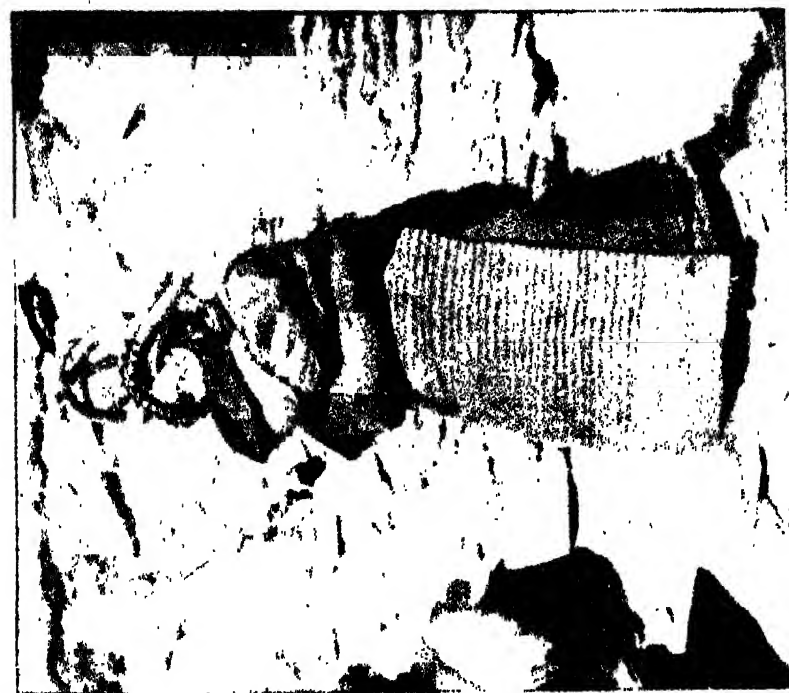
▼ Showing construction of Cane Bridge—the bamboos forming the footway lie loose within loops made of strands of bark.



A Thibetan Beggar.



A Chungtungi.



Shigatse Bazaar—a shy woman, and a treacherous one,—note the evil eye.



Young Woman of Shigai



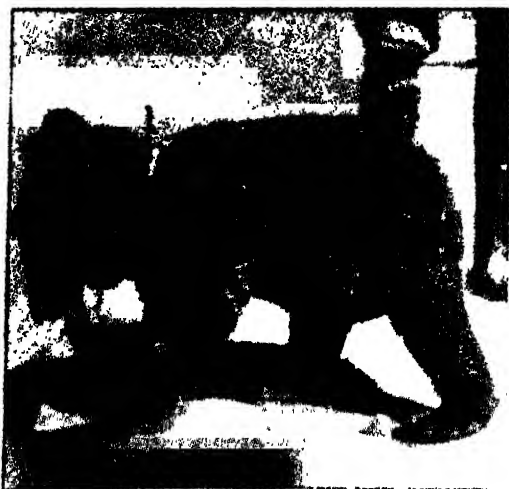
Chungtung Wom



Shigi



The famous Stag of Sikkim—a Captive at Shigatse



Sikkim Bear.



*Skin-boat on the Tsangpo
(Brahmaputra) at Shigatse.*



Giri—" . . . a desolate and wind-swept little village close to the border . . ."
—see page 60.



An Encampment at 16,000 feet—see page 55.



" . . . all water was frozen, one valley in particular showing a most picturesque series of white bands traversing the yellow ground"—see page 50.



Rhe Jong, and Gompa—note the knife-like character of the ridge,—see page 51.



Devil-dancers at Nartang—see page 49.



A Young Lady weaving, and her amused Papa—see page 57.



Jemadar Shahzad Mir—see page 67.



My brother Ernest equipped for Thibet



Scenes in the Kulu Valley—see page 89





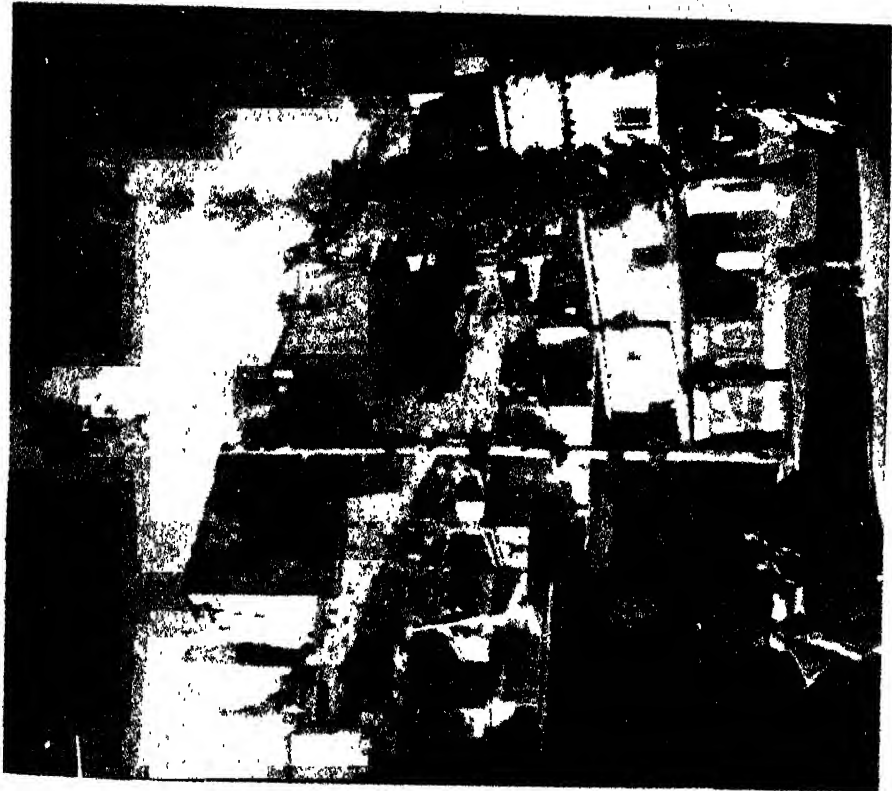
Lahoulis inspecting Photographs through a magnifying-glass.



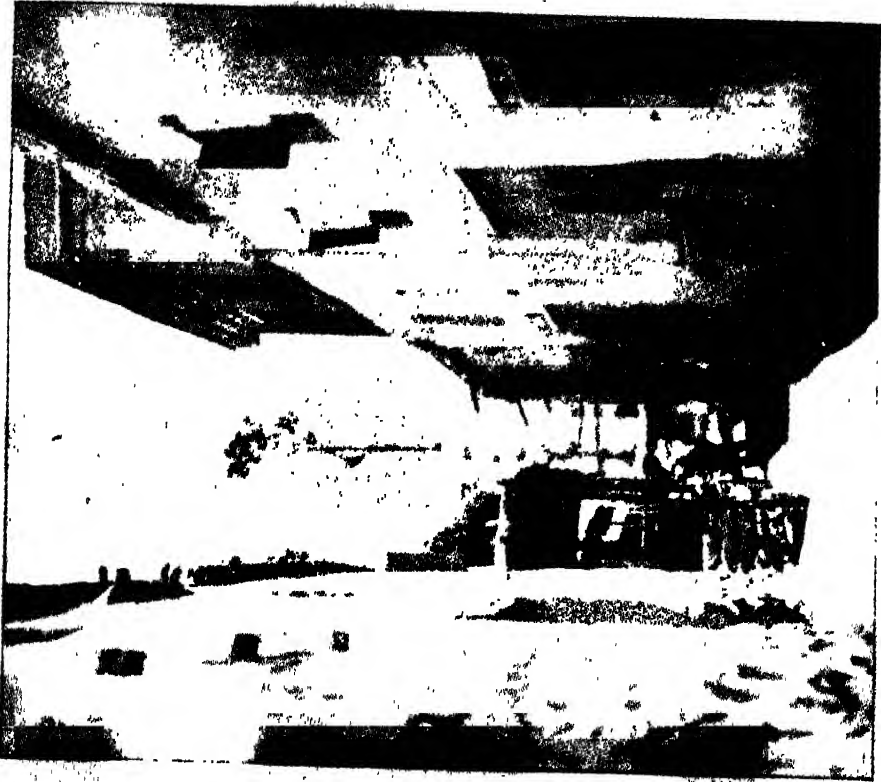
A young Married Woman of Leh.



A Ladaki Child.



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Three Little Girls.



Yaks crossing the Khardung Pass, 18,000 feet—see page 127.



Tibetan Antelope shot near the Karakorum Pass—see page 161.

1



... a huge finger of ice has stretched downward from a mighty hollow among the mountain-tops"—see page 139.



A Peak in Zanskar.



Rock weighing many tons upheld by a pedestal of ice—see page 140.



• A small lake of most exquisite colour and proportions"—note the stone hanging on the brink of the precipice,—see page 141.



Showing the splash made by the stone, which was pushed over by the Shikari.



Saduk Akhun—see page 231.



Hadji Raheem Sha—see page 171.



Kallick—see page 166.



"Four times in one day we forded this Stygian affluent"—see page 169.



A view in the oasis of Khotan.



surround the Saser Pass. The country in the lower reaches of this river is exactly the same as that of the Shyok, and our progress includes a series of delightful camps in shady gardens, surrounded by jungle that swarms with hare and chuckor, willing to jump into the pot at the sight of a gun. In one of the villages on the road there is a big gumpa, regarding which I was able to obtain some interesting information, throwing light on the life and character of the people in this out-of-the-way part of the world.

One hundred years ago, it appears, a lama of peculiar sanctity gave up the ghost, to the deep regret of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. For a period of ten years his place in the gumpa remained unfilled, none of the minor lamas being considered holy enough to occupy his shoes. But Lhasa now stepped into the breach with a letter indicating that the deceased saint had been re-incarnated, and that a child possessed by his spirit would be found in certain surroundings which were described in the letter. The lamas thereupon began to scour the countryside, and in due course they came across a tiny boy who fulfilled in all respects the requirements specified in the communication from Lhasa. The child grew to manhood, and took his place as abbot of the monastery, the fact of his being a re-incarnation of a local worthy adding greatly to his reputation. The new abbot proved to be a man of character, and the fame and credit of his monastery has spread over all Ladakh in these days. The third re-incarnation reigns at present, and maintains the traditions set by his former self, which impose regulations of the strictest upon the unfortunate, or perhaps one ought to say privileged, members of his institution.

Every night at sunset the abbot goes round the monastery and locks each monk into his cell, an apartment so small that the inmate cannot lie down, but must sleep in a sitting posture. Each individual is furnished

with a lamp and books, and he is expected to study the Scriptures until overcome by fatigue. And fatigue has a big say in the poor man's life, for he works all the day in the glebe belonging to the monastery, and enjoys but one meal throughout the twenty-four hours. The older and more senior men are exempt from manual labour, but all are busy from morning to night with their respective duties. The single meal of the day is partaken of at twelve o'clock. Meat is never touched, nor are any of the monks allowed to drink or smoke. A breach of these rules means instant expulsion. So far as I have been able to discover, the monks of this monastery are the only ones that systematically endeavour to do good amongst their people. A poor man can always count on assistance, and they are unremitting in their attentions to the sick. Two or three of the lamas have been trained as doctors, and their skill, not inconsiderable in the matter of simples, is always at the disposal of the ailing. They make no charge for attendance, and it is only those who are well able who make any recompense. The austerity of the lives of these lamas, and their devotion to the people, have resulted in the great popularity of the gompas, and voluntary subscriptions are frequent and liberal. So well recognised are the virtues of these good men that the Maharajah of Kashmir, a Hindu ruler, has entirely relieved them of revenue demand on the considerable area of land brought into cultivation by their industry, and has promised exemption for all ground which they may reclaim in the future.

Panamik is the last oasis on the Indian side, and there is 400 miles of marching to be done before cultivation is encountered again. The augmentation hereafter of the transport rates shows that the journey northward is no light matter to embark upon. Up to Panamik the Kashmir Government has settled that eight annas shall be the charge per animal per stage. At such a price it is pos-

sible to travel cheaply and comfortably, for half a dozen ponies will carry camping equipment and stores sufficient for two or three months. But beyond Panamik there is not an inhabitant until Chinese territory is reached. The principle of forced labour which prevails in Kashmir is that each village is bound to provide transport to the next, either for the traveller, the sportsman, or the merchant. In reality the labour is forced, but in effect the villager is well paid by the fixed rates, in addition to which the obligation is considered in the revenue settlement. It would, however, be quite beyond the intentions of the State Durbar to force the people of a village bordering on a huge desert to convoy travellers to the next point where transport was available. Indeed such a regulation would be tyrannical and unreasonable. So at Panamik the fixed transport rates disappear, and thereafter prices are regulated by supply and demand.

From Panamik to Shahidowla, the nearest Chinese post, the distance is about 180 miles, divided into twelve stages. Calculated according to the fixed rates this would represent a charge per animal of Rs. 6 for the journey to Shahidowla. But the present prevailing rate, from which there is never much deviation, is no less than Rs. 27 per pony. And when conditions are investigated, one cannot but admit that it is a reasonable charge. Every morsel of food for man and horse has to be carried, which alone adds about 30 per cent to the number of animals required to transport a given quantity of baggage. Then the journey is so severe that animals which accomplish it are completely knocked up, and must be rested for some weeks before doing further work. And, finally, the mortality amongst horses crossing the high passes and doing exhausting work in high altitudes is very great. Altogether, from Leh to Yarkand, it costs Rs. 65 to hire a transport animal, though it is possible to buy the same beast outright for Rs. 60 or even less.

Having reduced my baggage to a minimum, I find that four ponies will carry all that I need. These, plus riding nags for myself and each of two servants, make seven altogether ; and I contract with a worthy body of Panamik to run my caravan to Shahidowla for Rs. 189. For this sum he provides two more animals to carry food and three men to look after the nine ponies, paying of course for the feed himself. The mounting of servants may seem an unnecessary extravagance, but as their ponies carry each man's bedding and food, an additional transport animal is saved. Besides which no personal servant will come unless mounted, for the marching alone is a good day's work.

From Panamik, 10,500 feet, to the foot of the Saser Pass is two days' march, including a climb of 6000 feet. It is a weary and laborious performance for man and horse, for much of the road is so steep that one must dismount, and the high altitude of the last camp does not make for compensating comfort. The crossing of the pass itself is one of the most disagreeable experiences that has ever come my way, and in recounting the hardships of the horses I am not exaggerating, but stating facts.

The camp below the Saser Pass affords an extraordinary view of glaciers flowing from the ravines of the stupendous mountains that surround it on all sides. The pass itself would be easy enough to negotiate were it not for the ice, for the approach is gradual and the top about four miles of level going. But this space is positively inundated with glaciers from the flanking mountains. North and south the amalgamated glaciers present huge cliffs of ice which cannot be climbed, and which offer an impenetrable barrier to advance in either direction. The three or four thousand animals which annually cross each way must therefore climb the hillsides until level with the ice, and then march across the glacier and

repeat the performance downward at the other side to reach the level of the valley beyond. There is absolutely no road on either side, with the result that horses are subjected to pain and cruelty that is almost on a par with vivisection.

In the course of the five miles or so which constitute the difficult part of the pass I counted the skeletons of no less than ninety animals, most of which had died within the previous few weeks. Below the pass on either side there must have been hundreds of skeletons, while whitened bones are almost as plentiful as stones. The annual mortality among horses, mules, camels, and yaks making the journey between Panamik and Shahidowla is said to be about two hundred, a great proportion of which may be attributed to exhaustion consequent on the difficulties of the Saser Pass, the rest of the road being comparatively easy.

The Saser is approached from the south by a road that in such a country may fairly be termed excellent. One ascent of 2000 to 3000 feet has been constructed up the face of a huge cliff, the amount of blasting and buttressing being prodigious, and the cost doubtless very heavy. This road continues practically up to the face of the great glacier occupying the pass, and there it ceases entirely. Henceforth the animals unhappily engaged on this journey must climb up the slope of a steep moraine composed of the usual rocky debris. The elevation is over 17,000 feet, and the angle probably 60 degrees. The distress from the inconceivably rough going and the heavy loads is pitiable to witness, and many a willing little horse breaks his heart endeavouring to keep pace with the others. Broken blood-vessels of course are common, and pools of blood a frequent sight. The moraine surmounted, there is then a section of the mountain-side to traverse. This is little better than the moraine, though not so steep. Then comes the

passage from *terra firma* to the glacier. Rocks of all sizes litter the line of contact, and for laden horses I cannot conceive of anything more difficult or cruel. On the morning I crossed there was a merchant's caravan of about twenty animals immediately in front of my own, and two of the ponies were stuck in the rocks. Their loads had been taken off, and the poor brutes struggled fiercely for freedom. One got clear, his legs being cut in the most shocking manner. The other broke his back, and was left to the wolves and ravens, the latter of whom, huge and horrible creatures, take the place of the vulture in these regions. From these rocks up the steep side of the glacier was a task which many animals failed to accomplish. Several slipped and fell, and with their loads rolled down upon the rocks below. One was killed. Others had to be unloaded and hauled up the treacherous surface. Some were escorted by half a dozen men pushing and straining upon ropes. While my ponies were waiting their turn I got out an axe and after half an hour's work cut a series of steps up the slope, which enabled my small convoy to get up without accident. My efforts met with little sympathy, and my own followers seemed incapable of understanding what was required. When the steps were made I ordered them to gather sand and sprinkle the path. The men in actual charge of the horses were most reluctant to undertake this small exertion, and it must be acknowledged that the people themselves might save their horses much suffering if they possessed any sense and energy.

Across the glacier was another and less avoidable strain upon the unfortunate horses. Blood crimsoned the track at every step, the result of fetlocks cut in the rocks below. All my ponies were bleeding in some part of the legs; one had the skin of the pastern severed from the top of the coronet, presenting a gash

horrible in appearance and doubtless extremely painful. One broke a blood-vessel. Though we had started at break of day so as to cross the glacier when the surface was hard after the night's frost, the going was fearfully rough, and the horses plunged in a manner that was agonising to watch. My animals were comparatively lightly laden and perhaps better fed, but those of the merchant in front went through a terrible ordeal. For nine days they will get to eat no more, perhaps less, than two pounds of barley per day and practically no grass, for what they can pick up on the road is hardly worth considering. I am positive that the strain of crossing the Saser must have done permanent harm to several, and that low feeding combined with continued exertion can have had no other result than heavy mortality.

CHAPTER XIII.

A LIVING GLACIER.

A GLACIER is a wonderful and terrible manifestation of the processes of nature. Every schoolboy knows what a glacier is, how it is generated, and why it fills a valley from side to side as readily as if it were water. But it is not everybody who has walked across one of these strange monsters, studied its idiosyncrasies, and endeavoured to comprehend its individuality. Doubtless the Bullock Workmans, the Freshfields, and others know all there is to know about glaciers, but to my mind these great travellers have merely described the body of the glacier and taken no account of its soul. And who that has spent hours on one of these ponderous moving things, listening to the cracking of its joints and to the heavy sighs that come from its depths, can deny that there is spirit as well as bulk in the leviathan of the mountains?

Near the Saser Pass there is a valley in which a hundred years past ran the road to Yarkand. But long ago a glacier came down from the hills and blocked the way, so that travellers must now take another route. The original glacier lies there still, filling the valley to a depth of many hundreds of feet and a mile or so in width. Anything more dirty or filthy could hardly be imagined. Its tail end is a big precipice of muddy grey, with two yawning caverns at the foot,

from which torrents of ugly water pour out with a sullen roar. The surface is just like the bed of a river in a mountainous land, covered with stones, boulders, and rocks, ranging in size from a marble to a cathedral.

From a distance there is nothing to be seen but an irregular and rolling valley, differing little in appearance from the rocky slopes that bound it on either side. But as one approaches more closely it becomes evident that there is here more than has met the eye from a distance. In the middle of the old and weather-worn glacier there is a huge gash showing dirty grey slopes like those at the tail end. Evidently there is a hill in the middle of the valley, and the glacier in passing over the obstruction has broken its back. Then to one side there is a long white line that shines brightly in the sun. This traced to its source proves to be a young glacier that came into being long after the older one, and, flowing from a higher and smaller valley, has run along the surface of the original occupant in a narrow stream of ice that has not yet had time to get dirty. Then at another point a huge finger of ice has stretched downward from a mighty hollow among the mountain-tops and pierced the side of the old glacier at right angles, just as one ship might ram another. Altogether there are five smaller and younger glaciers pouring on to the parent one, and where the junctures are it is terrible to look.

After a fruitless morning after ibex, the shikari and myself devoted the forenoon to an exploration of the huge grey creature that lay in our path. No sooner had we left the solid hillside and stepped upon the chaos of tumbled stone than we were conscious of a difference. Everything was in a state of poise, and the rocks rattled from under our feet in dangerous fashion. Stepping warily, we slowly advanced over the broken surface, an alpenstock thrown point down springing back with a jerk that suggested life and elasticity under-

neath. As a rule we could see nothing but rocks under foot, but occasionally we came to places where black ice oozed up, and the stones were embedded in it like currants on the top of a pudding. Every now and then a bank of rubble would collapse and slide flat with a disconcerting rattle. At one spot there was a pale-green pool, and as I was looking at this patch of colour amid such unlovely surroundings, it began slowly to sink, and suddenly disappeared with a loud sough. A horrid bubbling and sucking came from a crack where the pool had been; then the stones all around slid into the hole and filled it up, so that it looked just like the rest of the ground we were walking upon. Avoiding the spot, we came to the place where the new glacier flowed over the old one. Where the side of the one touched the other there was a little river running in a channel of beautiful, pale-blue ice. The flowing water had played strange tricks with its surroundings, fantastic shapes showing where it had carved its way. Most curious it was to see a great rock, weighing many tons, upheld by a slender pedestal of ice. Similar monuments filled the bed of the stream, and one collapsed while I leant upon it, the rock fortunately falling away from me. On one with a good solid support I made the shikari climb, that he might be photographed in so unique a position.

Then by dint of cutting steps we reached the place where the big finger came down and poked into the ribs of the old glacier. It was a horrid sight, for the face of the smaller glacier was all cracked and wrinkled, and huge splinters looked desperately like tumbling upon our heads. Underneath our feet was a loud murmur that betokened a sub-glacial stream, but which sounded more like a muffled roar of pain. The huge fissures in the old glacier and the bruised appearance of its side suggested suffering. From the meeting-point we hurried away, for where two glaciers argue for the road is no place for a

human being to linger. Retracing our steps, we crossed the glacier lower down and hit upon a small lake of most exquisite colour and proportions.

It was perhaps forty yards long and twenty wide. One side was a precipice of pure green ice, with an outward slope and a low hollow gallery close to the water. Continual dripping showed that the ice-wall was slowly melting, and the falling of stones and rocks from the debris on top occurred every now and then. The opposite side of the little lake was a slope of perhaps 30 degrees, covered with huge rocks. On one of the latter I took my place to see what happened, for there was a big stone on the very brink of the opposite precipice, waiting to lose its balance when a little more of the ice had melted. While watching, a slide occurred on my own side and gave us warning that a wetting was the possible price of overlooking the domestic affairs of this old glacier. The slide began with a small stream of sand, followed by stones, and then by a rock that cannot have weighed less than twenty tons. This monster began slowly with a grating sound, that, as his pace increased, grew into a deep roar. The end was a plunge into the water that sent waves dashing backward and forward in fierce tumult. While the rock was sliding an electrical tremor ran through the ice, and when it dashed upon level ground below the water the whole glacier jumped from the shock. Immediately the agitation of the water began to subside little caverns and fissures all round the lake began to belch air with a loud bubbling noise. This continued for nearly five minutes, and I wondered if it was the prelude to another complete disappearance of the water, such as I had witnessed an hour before. Thinking that if such a thing occurred on such a scale the consequences might be serious, I proposed to accelerate the progress of the stone hanging on the brink of the opposite side, and then to return to dry

land. The shikari went round with my alpenstock to give it a push. He gave the push and nearly slid in after the stone, a fortunately timed photograph showing the ensuing splash and the alacrity with which the wise man darted backward. Having tempted Providence sufficiently for one morning we then retired as quickly as possible, and I am no judge of *diablerie* if the glacier did not sigh like a disappointed fiend when we stepped safely ashore.

Glaciers are sinister brutes, and sometimes they display an intelligence in their designs against humanity that is positively Satanic. The cataclysms for which they are responsible in this part of the world are comparatively common, and when they occur the destruction to life and property is lamentable. These catastrophes happen without the world knowing much about them, probably because they occur in remote regions out of touch with civilisation. But the cataclysm of the Indus which took place in 1841 had far-reaching effects, and is remembered in India to this day. Not among Europeans, however, for at that time the Punjab was not under our rule, and contemporary chronicles merely record its occurrence. Major Cunningham, in his book on Ladakh, published shortly afterwards, describes this cataclysm, and in travelling through the country where it took place I have been able to confirm his version in many respects. The glacier which caused the trouble still exists, and I saw it when crossing the upper Shyok river at a distance of about five miles. Unfortunately I was unable to visit the upper side owing to the state of the water.

Near its source the Shyok river is spanned by enormous glaciers that slide down from the adjacent mountains and thrust their snouts across the gorge of the river. The usual causes combine to disintegrate the ice, and it is believed that during the autumn of 1840 one of those natural bridges over the Shyok collapsed and partially

blocked the flow of the river. In December and January 1840-41 it was observed at Attock that the Indus was unusually low, and that in February and March it was even fordable. Although melted snow in April and May increased the volume of water, there was still so marked a decrease in the usual quantity that it was assumed something was happening in the upper reaches. And, indeed, 800 miles upstream there was in preparation a cataclysm of terrible and unprecedented proportions. The lake which formed on the upper side of the collapsed glacier has been traced and found to measure 12 miles in length and half a mile in breadth, with a depth of 400 feet close to the obstruction. Altogether it has been calculated that about 23,000,000,000 cubic feet of water was gathered behind the glacial barrier, ready to be precipitated into the practically empty bed of the river.

In June the catastrophe occurred. A tremendous wave swept down the valley of the Shyok with irresistible force, followed the bed of that stream for 300 miles, when it plunged into the Indus and continued its progress for another 500 miles to Torbeela, close to the plains of India. Having fallen 14,000 feet during a race that had lasted over two days, the wave continued its way with unabated force and swept past Attock in a wall of thick muddy water 30 feet high, submerging the fort of Khairabad, and thereafter coursing with overwhelming strength through the Punjab and Sind to the sea, a further distance of 900 miles, or 1750 miles altogether. For several hundreds of miles every village in its upper course was destroyed, every acre of cultivated land licked up, every tree torn up by the roots, while human beings and cattle were immolated by the thousand. Five hundred men of a large army encamped near Torbeela were drowned, and the whole camp and equipment destroyed. The devastation between Tor-

beela and Attock was so great that a historian of those days wrote that "it will take hundreds, if not thousands, of years to enable time to repair the mischief of that terrible hour." In the plains of the Punjab and Sind damage was tremendous, both to life and property.

The same sort of thing on a small scale is continually occurring in this country of glaciers, but people seem more wary nowadays, both in regard to themselves and their property. Occasionally a landslide has similar consequences, and the cataclysm of the Sutlej, which took place over a century ago, is worthy of description. At a point on the river not far from Simla, where the banks consist of precipices rising several thousands of feet, the shoulder of a vast mountain suddenly gave way and slid into the gorge. The flow of the river was completely blocked, and a lake began to form on the upper side of the obstruction. Below, the river-bed became quite dry, with the exception of pools here and there. For forty days the water accumulated, affecting the stream for a distance of twenty miles along its upper course, and rising to a height of 400 feet at the point dammed. It has been estimated that no less than 19,000,000,000 cubic feet of water was pent up, when percolation and pressure had so weakened the obstruction that it gave way and released the imprisoned river. A wave, varying between 50 and 100 feet high, then rushed headlong down the river-bed, carrying everything before it. Numerous villages were swept to destruction, and the greater part of the populous town of Bilaspur was devastated. The wave continued its progress for over a hundred miles, when it debouched from the hills and entered the plains near the town of Rupar. Here it cannoned against the low range of the Sewaliks, left the bed of the river, and careered across country towards a tributary of the Beas. Following the bed of this stream, the wave roared

along for another 150 miles, when it plunged into the bed of the Beas itself and was broken on the high cliffs that form the right bank of that river. So deep was the trench formed by the wave that the river soon after left its old bed, and to this day follows the course of the flood. Records of the damage done in the plains are not available, but in the hills the cataclysm was anxiously awaited, and the bursting of the barrier was signalled by the firing of rifles, which warned the inhabitants of the approaching danger. Immense loss of property took place, but few lives were lost, says Cunningham.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE KARAKORAM PASS.

THE ordeal of the Saser Pass accomplished, there is the Shyok river to be crossed again. Nearly a week earlier we had passed it by means of a handsome bridge at a height of 10,000 feet. Now, at a point 150 miles nearer its source, and at an altitude of 15,000 feet, the Shyok again confronted us, in a truculent manner characteristic of its glacial origin. At the upper end of the enormous loop which the river forms it flows in a gravelly bed about half a mile wide. Of this breadth the stream occupies about half, running in three or four separate currents divided by low banks level with the top of the water. Owing to the melting snow it is unfordable except in the morning, when the night's frost restricts the volume of water. The Kashmir Government used to keep two large ferry-boats for the transport of horses and their loads, but in one of the periodic floods these boats were torn from the moorings, swept downstream, and smashed to pieces. Now three men remain who watch the state of the river and advise travellers when and how to negotiate the ford.

We were warned that the crossing must take place between eight and ten in the morning, and at that time my small caravan and another hundred animals carrying merchandise were assembled on the bank of the river. One of the three men was wading hither and thither,

naked to the waist, searching for a passage, and he duly returned and reported that we must wait. The unfortunate creature had been nearly an hour in the icy water, and when he came back he was shivering in pitiable fashion. A surer way of catching one's death of cold I cannot imagine. Then a merchant went out a little way to prospect, and came back in a great hurry, or rather his pony did, for the river was full of lumps of ice racing along almost completely under the water. These small icebergs weighed from fifty to one hundred and fifty pounds, and as they were travelling at anything from five to fifteen miles an hour, no horse could stand their bumping. In fact horses' legs have been broken by them, and so the hundred nags were off-loaded to wait a more favourable moment. I tried to get my men to make a dash for it, but they would not budge.

After three hours' delay the river began to rise, and it was a case of now or never. I persuaded my fellows to have a try, and I gave them a lead, one of the waders going in front to show the way. In the very first current, with the water up to my pony's belly, a lump of ice struck him square on the hocks, and he nearly jumped out of his skin. Fortunately we were close to one of the shallows, and for this the little brute made a dart. If I hadn't been frozen to the saddle by the cold I must have fallen off, but the feel of that water round my legs put the rest of my body in such a funk that I was physically incapable of letting go. It was impossible to cross at right angles owing to the depth and force of the water, and because of the ice. We therefore went down with the stream, edging across when opportunity offered, and returning upstream along the intermediate banks. The crossing occupied about an hour, and at the end of it I had to take off my boots to see if my feet were alive. The poor creatures who had done it on foot, stripped to

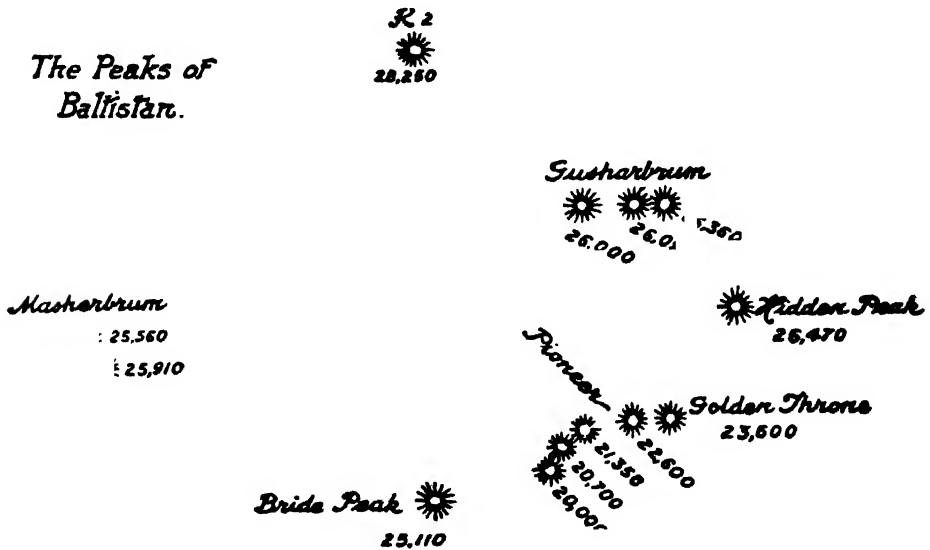
the waist, were grey with cold, and it was quite affecting to see them pinching themselves to see if their legs were really their own. They all sat down in the sun for a little time. Whether they hoped to get warm in that way, or because they were afraid of their legs dropping off if they walked, I have never been able to determine. We were all safe, however, both in body and spirit, the latter proved by the energy with which my party jeered at the pusillanimous merchants on the other side, who still refused to venture. My followers, however, be it remembered, were only risking my baggage, but the merchants had valuable property which they did not want swept down to Karachi. My sympathy was certainly with the merchants, who remained upon the opposite bank, high—and dry.

We were not yet clear of water. The road now left the Shyok and ran up a narrow gully in the mountains, through which flowed a small tributary of the main river. This gully was nothing but a deep chasm with tremendous precipices on either hand. The torrent rushing down just cannoned backward and forward from side to side, and as there was no road but the bed of the stream we had to do likewise. We were four hours in that river-bed, and it is no exaggeration to say that we crossed the water at least one hundred and fifty times. It was usually 30 feet wide, and deep enough to touch the pony's belly and keep one's feet below zero. Eventually we got out of this horribly uncomfortable ravine, and camped for the night at 15,100 feet, at a place where I shot five big hares.

For a day or two we wandered along river-beds that filled narrow ravines so that banks to walk upon were non-existent. It was trying work crossing and recrossing the icy streams that meandered athwart the track, but there was no avoiding them, and no chance of evading wet feet, which in this country are synonymous with

frozen feet. From the second passage of the Shyok we steadily ascended towards the Depsang Plain, a great tableland 17,000 feet high, and commanding a marvellous view for over a hundred miles to the east and west. The mountains of Chanchenmo and Lingzi Than in the east showed the line of the Thibetan border, and in the west soared the famous peaks of Baltistan.

The latter are little known, for comparatively few Europeans have ever seen them. A beautiful and wonderful sight, they are distant sixty or seventy miles from



Depsang, from whence they appear to be tightly packed in a group, shoulder overlapping shoulder. In reality they lie almost in a circle, of which the diameter is no more than twenty miles. K2 is higher than Kinchinjunga, and is the second highest mountain in the world. Lacking the massive bulk of the other, it gains in elegance by reason of its slender tapering peak. The group does not present so magnificent a barrier of ice and snow as that seen from Darjeeling, but the spire-like tops soaring sharply above the edge of the dull tableland of Depsang have a grace and beauty not less impressive than is afforded by

the Snowy Mountains of the Eastern Himalayas. But how can one judge between these marvels of nature, each of which is a law unto itself and a thing beyond human criticism? Here I cannot refrain from mentioning that within a space of five months I have gazed upon the three highest mountains known to humanity, an opportunity which perhaps has never yet fallen to mere man.

Such things are not to be seen lightly, nor would one wish that the toil and trouble could have been abated. The memory of these wonders of the earth is a priceless possession, none the less precious because one has waited and endured somewhat to obtain it. A lasting regret there is—that one has seen these things and must remain for ever inarticulate. It is one thing to see a pale white shape faintly gleaming against the blue sky, and quite another thing to express the grip it takes of the heart and the imagination. A stony colourless plain and, far beyond, a dim shaft of light like a broken spear projecting above the horizon. Yet how much is suggested—a vast bulk hidden from view, long miles of snow-clad slopes, immeasurable cubic yards of green ice; the covering the accumulation of centuries, the thing itself a monument to some convulsion of nature dating back into ages beyond comprehension. A thing of perfect serenity, looking down upon the world with placid calm; yet one knows how the wind rages among its pinnacles, and how the storms of winter howl like wild beasts in its ravines. The mother of rivers that nourish millions of humanity, the progenitor of floods that wipe out human endeavour as if it were writing on a slate. A jewel in the sunlight, and a terror in the darkness. Its head poised in the uttermost limits of the air we breathe, its feet in the bowels of the earth, where are generated the catastrophes that shake the world.

A strange place is Depsang Plain. The tops of a hundred mountains that befringe it give an impression

of loftiness, a feeling that one is looking down upon the rest of the world. There is no vestige of vegetation up here ; nothing but gravel in long low smooth sweeps meets the eye. A few small lakes of deepest ultramarine float mirage-like in the hollows, and at their edges disport lonely dabchicks. Death is manifest in the hundreds of skeletons that make white patches upon the all-pervading drab. What a record of animal suffering do these whitening bones indicate ! And here we encounter vultures for the first time, huge loathsome creatures, that waddle fearfully away from their prey when they hear the crunch of horses' feet. They are too gorged to fly, and their very helplessness makes them the more timid. A dead horse lying in an attitude of utter exhaustion, this foul bird with hooked beak and talons, tell of horror and tragedy even in this remote spot, surrounded by all that is most beautiful and grand among the greater works of nature.

From Depsang the track drops a few hundred feet, and we make a long and laborious journey up a river-bed. The stream which meanders along it is insignificant in size, and is merely a tributary of the greater Shyok which it joins down below. But this little river rises in the watershed that divides India from Central Asia. Within 100 yards of its source the beginnings of the great Yarkand river emerge from the rocks, the one forming part of the mighty Indus that discharges into the sea after a journey of 2000 miles, the other flowing north and emptying its waters into the capacious maw of the Tarim desert. From this river-bed to the top of the Karakoram Pass there is an ascent of about 1500 feet.

On the flat my little horse breathed heavily, and every now and then stopped to ease the thumping that threatened to rend his chest. To ask him to carry me up the approach to the great pass seemed gratuitous cruelty,

and so I slid off his back and began slowly and heavily to climb. The gradient is well arranged, and might be overcome with little exertion were it not for the uncanny rarity of the air. One breathes half a dozen times to find that on a sudden one must gulp or gasp like a person in a fit to satisfy the accumulated craving for air. The violence of the effort sets the heart panting like a sledgehammer, and the person who at that moment refuses to take warning runs the risk of internal rupture—and perhaps death. Human beings are sensible enough to know when to take an easy, but the unfortunate horse, heavily laden, obeys the behest of his master until the vital clockwork breaks—hence the skeletons that lie in every direction. The Karakoram Pass is the highest in the world which serves the purpose of an avenue of trade between two great regions. In the Himalayas there are higher passes, but they are seldom used, and only on special occasions. And having tried 18,550 feet, one is content never to want to go higher than the Karakoram.

What place in the world is without its record of human crime and tragedy? Even up here among the clouds the devil in mankind gets loose and stultifies the claim we make to the possession of a soul, and to superiority over the merely animal. In 1888 a murder was committed in the Karakoram Pass, and just below the actual crossing stands a heap of stones to mark the occurrence. On the top of the heap there used to rest a handsome white marble slab engraved with the particulars, but the marble is now broken to pieces, and the once orderly pile reduced to a scattered heap. The story is doubtless known to people who have lived long in India, but for the younger generation perhaps it may have interest, for it involves a mystery which has never been fathomed. An exhaustive inquiry was made at the time by the British authorities in Kashmir, and the guilt fixed and ultimately punished. But so far as I have been able to discover, no motive for

the crime has ever been assigned, and the reason of it remains unexplained to this day. One of my servants is a man called Kallick, who has served many distinguished travellers, among them Bower, Younghusband, Sven Hedin, Wellby, &c., and he remembers the affair distinctly. From him I obtained the following narrative, which I believe is substantially correct, though possibly not altogether accurate as to details.

Concerned in the affair were a young Scotsman named Dalglish, and a Kabuli called Dad Mahomed Khan. Dalglish was well known, having accompanied Carey, of the Bombay Civil Service, upon one of the boldest and most laborious exploring expeditions ever undertaken in Thibet and Central Asia. The Pathan was a rather notorious trader between Yarkand and Ladakh. Dalglish, both before and after his adventures with Carey, had traded to Yarkand, and knew Dad Mahomed well, and appeared to have entertained considerable friendship for him. But during Dalglish's absence in Thibet Dad Mahomed had had bad luck, losing all his ponies in a storm when conducting a caravan of merchandise between Central Asia and Kashmir. To carry on his business he had recourse to Hindu money-lenders. Matters did not prosper with him, however, and in time he was pressed for repayment of the borrowed money. Being unable to settle, he was called up before the British Joint Commissioner at Leh, who notified him that until he paid his debts he would not be allowed to trade upon the Yarkand-Leh road.

For two or three years Dad Mahomed lived idly at Leh, when Dalglish returned from his travels and prepared to resume his trading ventures to Central Asia. He invited Dad Mahomed to accompany him, and applied to the authorities to have the injunction against his Pathan friend rescinded. Permission not being forthcoming, Dalglish marched north with a small caravan,

but halted on the way, and wrote back to Dad Mahomed to follow him. This Dad Mahomed did, with or without permission Kallick could not say. He joined Dalglish at Tankse, and the pair proceeded as far as the Karakoram Pass in the utmost amity. Dalglish had given Dad Mahomed a tent, a horse to ride, and had generally instructed his servants to treat him as they did himself.

Camped immediately to the north of the Karakoram Pass one day, Dad Mahomed was having tea in Dalglish's tent. The two were observed to walk out together, Dalglish's rifle being carried by Dad Mahomed. Shortly afterwards a shot was heard, nothing remarkable, as shikar was abundant on the road. But immediately afterwards Dad Mahomed rushed up to the servants' tent and said that he had shot the Sahib. The servants ran to the spot where their master lay, Dad Mahomed meantime providing himself with a tulwar from his own tent. With this weapon he returned to Dalglish, who was only wounded in the shoulder, and warning the servants off, he proceeded to hack at the stricken man until he had murdered him. Being armed, he then drove the servants back to their tent, and warned them at their peril not to leave it.

Dad Mahomed now occupied Dalglish's tent, remaining awake throughout the night for fear of reprisals from the servants. In the morning he ordered the horses to be loaded and the caravan to proceed on its journey north, he himself riding Dalglish's horse. Arrived at the next stage they encamped, Dad Mahomed telling the servants they could do what they liked with the merchandise and go where they liked. He rode off on Dalglish's horse, the only thing he took, though a large sum in notes was eventually found in the dead man's baggage. The servants returned with the baggage to the Karakoram Pass, picked up Dalglish's body, and returned to Leh. In due course Dad Mahomed was found

guilty of murder, and a large reward offered for his apprehension. No motive for the crime was discovered, robbery not being the object apparently, because nothing belonging to Dalglish was touched except the horse upon which the murderer rode away.

There now followed an interesting chase, and as the facts were related to me by the chief participator, Colonel Bower, their accuracy can be relied upon. Bower at the time was shooting in the Pamirs, and shortly afterwards left the mountains to visit Kashgar. There he received a letter from the Indian Government stating the facts, and instructing him to arrest Dad Mahomed at all costs, and bring him back to India for trial. The story was well known in Kashgar, for Dad Mahomed had come straight to the town and boasted of his deed. The Chinese took no interest in the affair, but the Russians had been eager to arrest him, and would have done so if he had set foot in the Consulate grounds. It appears that Dad Mahomed frequently walked past the sentries jeering, but carefully avoiding Russian soil.

It was necessary that Bower's mission should be kept secret, else there would be no hope of catching the culprit, who had left Kashgar in an easterly direction some weeks before the arrival of the instructions from India. Bower wrote to India to say that there could be small prospect of success, seeing that practically the whole of Asia was open to the fugitive. However, he took the best possible means to run his man to earth, and, in consultation with a Hindu merchant who cherished a deadly hatred of Dad Mahomed, sent emissaries along the principal routes to make inquiry. These had to proceed carefully, lest their purpose became known. In case they got on the trail, they were furnished with letters declaring who they were and what their object was. These letters, of course, were not to be used except in extremity.

The two men sent into Afghanistan had a curious adventure. They were arrested in Balkh, where they gave out that they were doctors searching for particular plants. The Amir, Abdur Rahman, was in Mazar-i-Sharif at the time, and the men petitioned to be allowed to go before him. This being conceded, they handed Bower's letter to the Amir, who read it through, and confirmed the statements of the prisoners. Those plants, however, he said to the men, were not to be found in Afghanistan, but he recommended them to try Bokara, where he had heard they grew. The men were then released, and given presents of money and clothes.

Meanwhile Bower himself marched east in the direction Dad Mahomed was supposed to have gone. Near Aksu a man came into camp and asked what was the nationality of the Sahib. On being told that Bower came from India, he expressed astonishment, for he had thought people from India were black. He then volunteered the information that in the neighbourhood was another foreigner, whose nationality nobody could determine. He was a tall man, and something like the Sahib. This man had come nobody knew where from, and lived in the jungle, where he earned money by cutting wood. Bower felt very little doubt that this was his man, and immediately made preparations for catching him. But on reaching the place the bird was flown. The presence of an Englishman from India was quite enough for Dad Mahomed, if it really were he. It was while marching in this neighbourhood that Bower obtained the famous manuscripts connected with his name.

Many months had now passed with no tidings, and Bower had begun to think it was a hopeless business when news came from Samarcand that Dad Mahomed had been caught and lodged in a Russian prison. 'The two men sent in this direction had wandered west through the towns of Turkestan until one day, when walking in

the bazaar of Samarcand, they saw Dad Mahomed sitting on a box. The man who recognised him stopped and entered into conversation, while the other ran off to the Governor. This personage was no less than the great Kuropatkin, who, on being given Bower's letter, at once sent a squad of Cossacks to the bazaar and effected the arrest.

On being advised, Bower made all the arrangements for extradition, and had sent to India for an armed escort to take Dad Mahomed over at the Russian border. He and his followers were much rejoiced at the prospect of marching the culprit back to India and seeing justice done. There was, besides, the Government reward of Rs.5000 to be divided amongst the parties sent in pursuit. Great, then, was the disappointment when word came from the Russians that Dad Mahomed had hung himself in his cell, and cheated the avenger. The story of the crime, however, and the unrelenting manner in which the Indian Government hunted the criminal, became known throughout Central Asia, and greatly increased the prestige of the Sirkar. In the tiny cemetery reserved for Europeans at Leh, Dalglish was buried, the Indian Government placing a handsome stone over the grave, and making an annual allowance for its upkeep.

CHINESE TURKESTAN.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LAST OF THE PASSES.

At the top of the Karakoram Pass is an erection with writing intimating that British territory lies to the south and Chinese to the north. This peremptory announcement took me rather by storm, for while I was aware that some doubt existed as to the boundary, I had imagined Shahidowla and a place called Tam were the points about which disagreement existed. In an old route-book which I understood was officially published, it states that the Chinese boundary is crossed at Tam (Kathai), 65 miles distant from Shahidowla on the northern road. But to find it at the Karakoram Pass, no less than 155 miles to the south, according to the distances given in the route-book referred to, fairly arouses the lion which properly exists in every British subject. The land-grabbing of which we are accused all over the world must here have been of a very perfunctory nature.

I appealed to Kallick for explanation, and with the same lucidity with which he descanted upon the marriage customs of Ladakh and explained the murder of Dalgleish he related the following. He, Kallick, some years ago

served a distinguished British officer as caravan-bashi during an expedition into Central Asia. On arriving at Shahidowla Fort, which until a very short time before had been regularly occupied by Kashmir troops, the British officer observed that the fort was falling into disrepair. He called up the local Beg and arranged with him to put the place in order, and paid the sum of Rs. 800 for the purpose. Some time afterwards Kallick arrived in Kashgar, and there found that the Beg who had built up the fort at Shahidowla had been jailed by the Chinese, and his property confiscated, for obeying the orders of the British officer. The officer heard of it too, and interceded with the Chinese for the Beg, with the result that his Begship and all his property were put over the Chinese border with warning not to return. And to this day that Beg dwells on Russian soil.

Kallick's story does not end yet. Kallick now returned to India, and on the road found Shahidowla in ruins. But five miles farther on—that is, farther into Kashmir territory—he found a fort being built by the Chinese, and Chinese soldiers already in occupation! An astonishing thing to happen to the Sirkar! Later the Chinese put up the notice on the Karakoram Pass, and when Kallick saw that he concluded either that the world was coming to an end or that his own faculties were failing. Anyhow, Chinese soldiers occupied the new fort at Kurgan for some years, and a Chinaman acted as magistrate for the surrounding district. When I reached Kurgan I found that the soldiers and the magistrate had withdrawn, leaving a Yarkandi munshi and a dozen chaprassies to represent the might of the Emperor of Heaven.

I trust international complications may not ensue on account of this long-concealed revelation of Kallick's. Anyhow we cannot send a fleet to the Karakoram Pass,

and if we decide to send an army I decline to take any responsibility, for I have much reason to believe that Kallick is possessed of great cunning, in addition to intelligence, and that he would not stick at a trifle when endeavouring with a story to propitiate his master for a bad dinner. Without exception he is the worst cook in Asia, and the consciousness of it is surely apparent in his photograph.

Near the Karakoram Pass, for the first time I caught sight of the famous Thibetan antelope, or *Pantholops Hodgsonii*. This timid creature is one of the hardest to shoot, owing to his haunts being limited to the high plains of Thibet and Ladakh. During my recent journey in Southern Thibet we all looked out for him without success, and we were told his habitat was far to the north of Lhasa. Right through Ladakh I was on the watch, and it was only to the north of Depsang Plain, and when actually ascending the Karakoram, that we encountered an antelope that corresponded with the descriptions I had read. On the southern side of the Karakoram I saw thirteen females and ten young ones, but no males, and as Kinloch states that the females have short horns, I was greatly puzzled, for the females I saw had no horns. Nor was there any possibility of mistake, for I watched all I saw most carefully with powerful glasses.

Not until we crossed the pass did I see a male, and then there was no mistaking the horns. The females on the southern side of the pass were all alone with their young, but on the northern side they ran in herds of about a dozen all told, extraordinarily tame if one went by without taking any notice. They never let us nearer than 100 yards, and if we stopped to look at them they would bolt from 400 yards. It was a pretty sight to see the little ones race alongside their mothers, and the pace that the apparently new-born can travel is

astonishing. Of hundreds that I eventually saw, no females had horns, and there is no doubt Kinloch must be wrong in this particular. I spent many hours trying to get within range of the few single bucks I saw, but they are quite as timid as gazelle, and generally bolted at long distances. The height was over 17,000 feet, and it was no joke climbing among the low hills and over broken ground in such attenuated air. So when I got within 200 yards of a beast with fairly good horns, I was delighted to bag him and rest from further labour, for he was quite the best I had seen. No amount of measurement would make the horns more than $23\frac{1}{4}$ inches, but as they rarely go much longer perhaps I ought to be satisfied. Kallick, who has often been with Sahibs in Chanchenmo, said that a shikari Sahib would be very *khush* with such a head. My beast weighed a good hundred pounds, and made splendid eating. I should say that he was considerably bigger than the average black buck. My shot got him just behind the heart, and the expanding bullet tore most of his inside out, the photograph showing him in a paralysed condition exactly as he lay down on being struck.

I spent the whole of the next day trying to get a better head. I got within distant range several times, but the horns were all obviously smaller than the ones I already had. One beast looked as if his were bigger, or at any rate as big, and I followed him for five miles over the hills, until well above the Karakoram Pass, to a height that cannot have been less than 19,000 feet, and the brute never let me get nearer than 400 yards. It was a most fatiguing day, and I never fired a shot. Yet the labour was not without reward, for through the glasses I was able to see something of the habits of the creature I was hunting. In Chanchenmo antelope are said to hunt in large herds of buck alone, sixty and seventy being a not uncommon number. Here I saw

hundreds of females, mostly in lots of three and four, but occasionally as many as a dozen. But of the dozen or so of bucks that I saw throughout two days' close observation, there never were two together. From which I deduce that these single animals were denied admission to the herds of males, which evidently make Chanchenmo their home at this time of the year, for some particular reason. One male that I spotted on a distant ridge suddenly turned and ran towards me for no apparent reason. It was well on in the morning, and presumably he had done all the feeding he wanted. He came a good mile at a rattling pace, over a series of spurs and nullahs. In one of the latter he stopped and started kicking up a great dust with his hind feet, and when he had dug a hole he lay down in it, body concealed but back and horns easily to be seen. Several times he got up and repeated the digging, until he made a hole that satisfied him. I imagine the object of his galloping before lying down was to defeat any enemy which might have been stalking him while he fed. Females, I might remark, seem to feed all day, probably on account of their young, whereas the males confine their eating to the early morning and the evening. One curious feature of the male antelope is that on either side of the groin there is a hole which appears to penetrate far into the body. It has the appearance of a slit that is generally closed, and in that position measures about an inch. The Kirghiz say that by means of these holes he fills himself with wind when running, and thereby goes much faster. Kallick says that though he has seen many antelope killed, he never observed these holes before, nor did any of his Sahibs appear to know about them.

Dropping from the Karakoram Pass, we found ourselves in a country of rather a new kind. The height was very great, probably 17,000 feet, and the adjacent hills low and rolling. Ancient lake-beds were every-

where, and marks of ice abundant. In the wide open valley of the Yarkand river we saw several *shummal*s, or whirlwinds. On the ground there was the usual turmoil, but above, rising for probably 1000 feet, was a perfect funnel of uniform thickness that travelled slowly along, gently swaying as if an independent wind were affecting it. Above was a small cloud of no very terrible appearance. The day was perfectly still, and these strange manifestations in the silence were as startling as they were graceful. They came and went quite suddenly, like ghosts, leaving no sign behind them. While we were halted one came suddenly upon the camp, and startled us by the unexpected tumult. Everything flapped madly for a moment, and then we were smothered in dust and sand. Nobody saw anything coming, and I am certain nothing went. But my servants all knew it was a *shummal*. Kallick said so, and hinted that it was the spirit of the antelope that I had shot the day before. No harm was done to the camp, but it may be worth mentioning that the pull-through belonging to my rifle went missing that day, and that six men searching for an hour could not find it. But the antelope is a gentle creature, and doubtless the ghost of one would be content with just such a mild remonstrance.

A few days after the Karakoram comes the Suget Pass, marked 18,170 feet on my map, though I have seen it given as 17,600 elsewhere. The southern side is easily approached, for the rise cannot be more than a couple of thousand feet spread over a whole day's march. The rarity of the air caused the horses a good deal of distress, but the whole secret of negotiating great heights lies in taking them easily. From a sudden strain upon the organs such as a steep ascent entails, it is difficult to recover without abundance of ozone. But if men and horses are never hustled, I have no hesitation in saying that very high altitudes may be attained without marked

discomfort—always providing that due deliberation is observed in their approach. Anybody coming straight from the plains to 18,000 feet would die immediately, I believe, however strongly constituted. But gradually working up from the plains to Srinagar, and then to Ladakh, gives the opportunity and time for acclimatisation. The northern side of the Suget Pass is covered with a big patch of snow, and the descent is very steep, though much modified by an extensive series of zigzags. A few miles below the pass we encountered patches of grass, which were most welcome on account of the horses.

The road down from Suget Pass is too terrible for words. It all lies either in the bed of the river that rises in the pass, or among piles of detritus. The whole valley is one vast moraine. There is not a shadow of attempt at a road, and such a track as has been made by continuous traffic is usually not worth travelling upon. Most caravans strike out their own path. It is perfectly passable, but continual stepping over stones is horrible marching for tired and heavily laden animals. The descent is also very steep from the top of the pass to Kurgan, which entirely supplanted the Shahidowla of my imagination, being about 7000 feet in some ten miles. Kurgan was our first encounter with Chinese jurisdiction, and here I parted with my Panamik transport and began dealings with the Kirghiz.

Kurgan is a fortified place within the meaning of the act, but of precious little military significance from a modern point of view. The Suget nullah debouches at right angles upon the valley of the Karakash, and at the point of junction lies the fort, commanding the valley on either hand and the entrance to the nullah. As the nullah is one vast moraine of huge rocks, it would be quite easy to skirmish up to the walls of the fort, and once there Heaven help the defenders! Fifteen feet of rubble wall, two or three feet thick, surmounted by a

thin mud parapet, would go down at the first discharge of a mountain-gun, while the upper parapet would afford no protection to riflemen. But this construction of course was never meant for defence, but merely as a demonstration of the power of the Emperor of Heaven in the eyes of his innocent subjects, the Kirghiz.

A Mirza received me with due humility, and his pack of myrmidons scurried hither and thither making the small mud cabin which was to be my temporary residence as habitable as may be. A Mirza is a person who sends a written report, so I am told. In the present instance he was an individual of Yarkandi parentage, permitted to sell supplies to traders, and whose duty was to report to the nearest Chinese official upon arrivals at his station. A Sahib is a rare bird in these parts, and the whole countryside mobilised to look at him. There is just the fort and no other houses. But a Kirghiz encampment in the adjacent hills furnishes a few loiterers, who, with the dozen chaprassies who are the garrison of the fort, make up quite a respectable crowd. Before this assemblage I solemnly produced my Peking passport, a truculent document that threatened impalement and disembowelment against all and sundry in Chinese employment who do not guard, cherish, and comfort Fil-a-sheer Sahib, the well-beloved and trusty friend of the Lord's Anointed who sitteth in the Blue Above—or words to that effect. But the thunder of Peking struck no terror to the heart of the Mirza, for he could read no word of Chinese. He recognised the words Kashgar and Peking, however, and therefrom concluded I was a person entitled to travel in the country, and from whom loot might fairly be extracted.

To his assistance he called in the local Beg, a Chinese institution personified in the chief of the Kirghiz tribe roaming the neighbouring hills. In his person are represented law and order, and the divine right to skin the

helpless. Kallick, in conjunction with these robbers, hatched a plot whereby I was to pay Rs. 20 per load to Sanju, about six stages ahead. They swore various merchants with whom I had made friends to support this magnification of the legitimate rate, and afterwards they were to cut up the spoil. Ignorant of the arrangement, I called up the Beg to discuss the question of further transport. It was a case of camels, yaks, and horses at various stages of the journey, and the Beg said it would cost me Rs. 25 arranged through to Sanju. He evidently anticipated a protest, but I took the wind out of all their sails by declaring that Rs. 16 was quite enough, and that I would pay no more. It must have been a great blow to Kallick, who moved like a man in neuralgia for the rest of the day. But a certain Pathan, who had gone shikaring with me, and of whom more in another chapter, said, when I asked him about rates, that Rs. 12 would have been enough, and inadvertently let out about the plan to rob me. At the moment I bided my time, but rejoiced to think what might happen to the Beg when I reached the ear of a Chinese official who could read the passport.

Another determined attempt on my purse was made by Kallick, Mirza, and another member of the local talent, but owing to a good Scotch hold on the strings I was able to defeat it. I was known to possess sovereigns—coins which had excited much admiration when passed over to the Beg in payment of the transport arrangement. There was no question as to their relative value to the rupee, but when it came to the tenga, a silver coin current in Central Asia, it was deemed by the cabal in the kitchen that I could be but imperfectly informed. Now, a certain book in my possession happens to state that a tenga is worth 2½d., whereafter is but a trifling calculation to realise that a rupee must be worth about seven tengas. But they had

the impudence to come at me with five tengas to the rupee, Mirza introducing a man with a sack of them, while Kallick expatiated on the necessity of being provided on the road with a supply of coin current in the country. The blighting of human hope is a sad spectacle, and sometimes it is one man's duty to undertake it towards another. In the present instance I did not flinch from the task, though it is not in accord with my disposition to inflict discomfiture on a fellow-being. Sven Hedin was due at Kurgan a week or two later, and doubtless they kept the sack of tengas for him. But I have heard that Scandinavians look harder at a sixpence than even my own worthy countrymen, so doubtless he was vouchsafed strength to resist.

I spent a couple of days at Kurgan waiting for the Karakash river to go down. The crossing is dangerous when the stream is in flood, and the day before two men had been washed away and drowned. But in time news came that we might try, and my baggage went forward on camels, animals whose height gives them a great advantage over horses in fording rivers. Arrived at the bank, one of these great brutes with a reputation for braving the deep marched into the water until the loop of his neck was covered, giving the extraordinary impression of a neck and head towing a huge body. The surf from the rushing stream broke all over him, but he went superciliously onward, and in due time emerged dripping on the other side. There he knelt down and was relieved of his load, when he returned for me. Now I have ridden elephants and motor-bicycles and bolting horses without feeling more than the usual degree of human fear. But never had I chanced my life on a camel, and to be asked, at that time of life when silver threads begin to appear among the gold, to learn a new style of riding in the midst of a dangerous river, was highly unnerving. On a horse I were willing to brave

Niagara, but on a camel I felt like a murderer before a trickle of blood. Nevertheless it had to be, for I dare not belie my nationality in front of these bold mountaineers. I got down from the saddle to which long practice had so accustomed me, and approached the goggle-eyed brute, confident only that whatever he might do he couldn't kick while sitting on his stomach. But he looked like biting all over, and with such a neck he can reach for parishes.

On his back was a big cushion with two holes in it. Through these holes protruded the brute's humps—another proof of the rottenness of modern education, for at school I was taught to believe that camels had only one. From a tactical point of view it was clearly the thing to get between the humps as quickly as possible, and to trust that prudence would prevent the animal biting where he was liable to mistake camel for unwelcome jockey. I made a spring and reached my seat without accident, and then the man in charge swore at the beast. It immediately whistled loudly, and tried to buck me off, or rather I thought so in my alarm, for its method of rising to its feet gives the rider a feeling of earthquake underneath. It then proceeded to the river edge quite quietly, and I would have been confident enough were it not for a feeling that the hind legs might not always go as fast as the front ones, and that it might drift apart between the humps. But it stuck together all right, and plunged into the river, and, after a riotous few minutes among billows and foam, I saw the head arrive at the other side. Shortly afterwards my part of the beast climbed out of the water, and the danger was over.

The next encounter with the Karakash entailed a delay of four hours. The stream ran too fiercely for even the stilts of a camel, and so the baggage had to be man-handled over a fearsome spur from the adjacent

mountains, the while the animals went back upstream to a point where they might be swum across. From the brink of a precipice looking down on the ruined fort of Shahidowla I watched this painful performance, and internally petitioned that all other gifts which the gods might contemplate toward me might be cancelled in favour of a quintuple degree of patience. Four times in one day we forded this Stygian affluent, and many other times we squeezed by a bulwark of rock along which it raced in diminished fury. The camels managed these difficult places with comparative ease, but on small ponies it was risky work, and more than once I felt my little Trojan lifted off his feet by an extra rush in the water. But the instinct of self-preservation is strong in a horse, and he has no head to lose at a critical moment, like a human being. He just downs his hindquarters and plunges until he finds bottom. And when he finds bottom, his head is always pointing in the right direction. Kallick, on most of these occasions, absolutely declined to keep to horseback—he looks as if he had too much on his conscience—and had to be perched on the top of a loaded camel, which I will always believe caused him more agony than will the advent of his latter end.

But the Karakash did not last for ever, and there succeeded it one of those passes with which I fear to trouble the reader, for have I not worked the pass, its height, peculiarities, and dangers, to the very death? But the Sanju Pass is the very last which I shall inflict upon notice, and I believe everybody will agree that it is a brute. From the Karakash at about 9000 feet there runs a gully to the west, just a fissure in the mountains, chokeful of unspeakable debris. This runs up to the Sanju Pass, a distance of five miles and an ascent of 7600 feet. The going was horrible. Half-way up we found a sort of building, which Kallick informed

us had been built to Khoda by the Beg at Kurgan. Here we camped for the night, and in the morning swapped our horses and camels for yaks, so that I had still another kind of riding to learn. These unhappy beasts toiled the remaining 3000 feet and just managed to survive, for at the top they were done to a turn. I rode my beast for a mile or so, and then got off and led him up, thanking Heaven that there still remained in me strength to climb the last pass I hoped to see for many a day.

The top was characteristic, being a sharp descent for 1000 feet, which none but yaks could negotiate with a load. But instead of the usual bare waste of rock, the view that met the eye was a deep valley absolutely clothed in green up to 15,000 feet. It was what it looked, rich green grass, not over-thick perhaps, but dry, succulent, and nourishing. No wonder the yaks that had come over the hill to meet us were in good condition, for it was here they put on beef while waiting for business. In the distance we saw some bare patches adorned with round hummocks, and this I learned was the Kirghiz encampment whence came the yaks, and where we were to end the day's labour. At Kichik-yilak, which I defy any one but a Welshman to pronounce, we continued the journey on ponies, and in due time arrived at Sanju, the first oasis in Chinese Turkestan, and a genuine taste of Paradise after so much wandering in the wilderness.

CHAPTER XVI.

FRIENDS OF THE ROAD.

ONE day, after a long and tiring ride, we arrived at a small village—the same, by the bye, where dwelt the good lama who locked his monks in their cells at sundown. The lumbar dar, having had news of my coming, met me on the outskirts, and led my pony to the camping-ground, a pleasant tope of trees surrounded by a wall. Here I dismounted, and was looking for a shady spot whereon to rest when I became aware of a salaaming figure, and a voice that gave salutation in familiar Hindustani. Kallick, who was in attendance, explained that this was Hadji Raheem Sha, a saudagar of Khotan, and a traveller like myself, now returning to his home. The Hadji produced a large red *nundah*, which he spread under a tree and upon which he invited me to be seated. He was a cheery old man, and we were soon deep in conversation concerning the road and its demerits, life and its discomforts, and the compensations of religion. Khoda entered into all his calculations, and Inshallah was for ever upon his lips.

The Hadji was a native of Bajaur, and a subject of the King-Emperor. But long years ago he had emigrated to Central Asia, and now he dwelt in the city of Khotan, where Heaven had prospered his business. No less than eighteen times had he journeyed across the mountains to Kashmir bringing merchandise, and returning with the

choicest that the bazaars of India could produce. Owing to the rectitude of his life and the honesty of his dealings, the Almighty had entrusted him with the custody of considerable wealth, and now, towards the close of his days, he had accomplished that which is the aim and hope of every good Mussulman. In his old age he had made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and, if God willed, he would return across the passes to die in his own home. And looking at the frail old man, and listening to the shortness of his breath, it seemed just about even money whether he would or no.

With him was his son, a tall and powerfully-made young man with the face of a Greek. It was easy to see that the Hadji had married elsewhere than in his native land. The Central Asian cap lined with astrakhan, and set well back on the head, gave the son a Mercury-like appearance, while the light complexion and frank open countenance suggested anything but the parentage of the dark and withered old man before me. There must be a devilish handsome mother somewhere to account for this youth. Besides his son, the Hadji was accompanied by two sheep. These had travelled with him from Khotan to Kashmir, where they had waited while he made the all-important journey to far Arabia. And it began to look as if, by the grace of God, the sheep would be spared to return to their native land. Heaven had been kind, and the Hadji had found plenty to eat by the way, so their slaughter had not been necessary. They had become as tame as dogs, and ran about his camp as they listed. The Hadji also had a servant and two or three ponies with baggage, so that he travelled in comfort as far as possible. But these long marches in the hot sun, the terrific drop in the temperature at night, and the strain on heart and lungs from the rarefied air, were sapping strength, and the Hadji was prepared to lay his bones in the wilderness if Heaven so willed it.

What mattered it where the body rested if the soul went to Paradise? And the latest act of the Hadji's life had been to make peace with God. So the Hadji remained serene, content in the present and confident of the future. A hard case according to Exeter Hall, but what would not many a storm-tossed doubter between High and Low, between Big and Wee Free, give to enjoy a similar frame of mind and an equal degree of faith?

On the road you go as you please. Some travel early and some late. Some make a long day's journey and then rest half a day, while others slog away by short stages. My custom was to pound along until servants and horses had had enough, then to halt and rest them, the while I scoured the mountains for game. A fat buck or wild sheep brought joy to the camp, and filled with good meat bellies that seldom knew aught beyond the porridge of the country. And so, though the Hadji and I did not often travel in company, it frequently happened that our halting-places coincided. On such occasions I heard about his family, his property, his business, and the matters that filled his aged mind. Near the Suget Pass, after ten days in the heights on either side of the Karakoram, he had become very weak, his bones ached and his head burned, and he feared that his heart would fail him when within sight of home. But the old man remained cheerful, and never failed to greet me with inquiries for my health. One day I shot a hare, and delivered the *halal* with my own knife, and then presented the animal to the Hadji. He swore afterwards that he had eaten it up completely, bones and all, and that his heart thereby had been greatly uplifted. As he neither smoked nor drank, and would not touch my tea, I have my doubts whether so newly purified a person spoke the literal truth. But it remains that the incident of the hare made him my friend for life, and if he did

not eat the hare the innocent invention did no harm to anybody.

Another friend of the road is Zaidowla Khan. He contemplates the great pilgrimage, and longs to bear the honoured title of Hadji. I saw him first at Leh, and thereafter several times on the way. But one morning as I rode past his camp he insisted on my dismounting and drinking a cup of tea. This he brewed with his own hands, washing kettle and teapot and bowl himself in an adjacent stream. He built up the fire, and blew it with his own breath, allowing no servant to interfere with the operation. It was tea that cost Rs. 4 per seer in Bombay, and if I pondered the question as to how he allowed himself to be so cheated it did not interfere with my enjoyment of a most excellent infusion. Zaidowla Khan is somewhat of a sea lawyer, and knows all about the inner politics of the Kashmir Durbar and the British Raj. A Pathan by birth, he is British in allegiance, and takes no small pride in his understanding of the needs of that part of the Empire within his cognisance.

He also informed me that trade between India and Central Asia became more difficult each year, and that he had advised the British Commissioner that unless the roads were improved, he and others like himself could no longer afford to make the journey. The loss of time and the mortality of horses was such a handicap on the Indian trade as compared with advantages in these respects for traders with Russian territory, that connection with India was bound to disappear unless something were done. Indian subjects are debarred from crossing the Russian frontier, else they would turn to trade with Russia. It was because Indian merchants had no other resource that they continued making journeys to India. But few new merchants arose, and the trade was kept alive only by those who had been at it for years. Zaidowla Khan is

perhaps somewhat of a pessimist, and, like those who have passed the meridian of their days, prone to lament the past as compared with the present and future. What he would approve would be a mobilisation of the forces of the Empire, and the sweeping over the edge of the globe of all those who interfere with the business of the ryots of the Sirkar. He would have one Sirkar for all Turkestan, and that Angrezi. And here followed a eulogy of the Sahib as he is known in India, which out of sheer modesty I forbear to commit to print.

Zaidowla Khan is also a sportsman, and in former days carried a gun during his journeys to India. But the institution of game laws in the Kashmir State has checked his proclivities, besides which the ardour of the chase no longer appeals to his stiffening bones. Nevertheless the sight of a skinning operation and the cleaning of a head waked memories of his youth, and he insisted on accompanying me on my next expedition into the hills. He has the eyes of a hawk, and spotted game at distances that puzzled my glasses. After one long and circuitous stalk we reached the obverse slope of a hill behind which some antelope were feeding. It was the psychological moment, and we were both agog for the sight that we hoped would meet our eyes from the crest we were approaching. But just then the sun was hovering on the horizon, and as its rim began to disappear Zaidowla realised the situation and forgot all in the need to pray. Down he dropped in the sand, facing the departing sun, and commenced his orisons. By this time I had reached the top of the hill, to find the quarry gone. Zaidowla Khan came hurrying after me, and was more disappointed than I was that there was to be no shooting. As there was no further chance of shikar that night, he begged to be excused for a moment while he completed his prayers. And again he dropped down facing the west, and in the

name of Mahomet called upon his God until, as happened to Elijah in the wilderness, I almost expected to see the ravens come fluttering earthward.

While crossing the Depsang Plain we came to a spur of rock from which my pony shied violently. I then discovered that in a small cave sat a man, who immediately afterwards hailed Kallick in terms of recognition. I thought no more of this individual, whom Kallick explained was a Hadji returning to Yarkand. But some days later, when riding along, I discerned something lying on the track, which on drawing near turned out to be the prone figure of a man. As I approached, the figure did not move, and I began to suspect a tragedy. Only when I shouted loudly was there any response, and then the figure rose up with a jerk that sent my pony a quarter of a mile in terror. This was my friend of the cave asleep by the way. He was a very old man, and appeared to have fallen from exhaustion, but as Kallick said he would be picked up by my transport following in rear, I went on, Kallick the while telling me who he was and what he was doing in these desert parts.

Sinbad, for that is what I came to entitle him, was a native of Yarkand who had spent his life saving money to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. In extreme old age he had gathered together some seven or eight hundred rupees, and with this sum he had proceeded to Andijan, where the Russian railway gave him a big lift towards the goal of his ambition. In due time he reached Mecca and was purified from sin. But money for the return journey was limited, and he came back by steamer to Bombay, whence he had tramped and begged his way to Kashmir. It was plain enough sailing in populated regions, for India is the most charitable country in the world, but when it came to crossing the mountains the poor creature was in a corner. At Panamik he had scraped together sufficient food to carry

him over; but no food will put strength into an aged body, and he had sunk by the way.

I next encountered him some miles beyond camp aimlessly wandering along. In the clear air I could see a great distance ahead, and perceived that he did far more sitting down than walking, and that what walking he did was seldom in a straight line. The day was broiling hot, and the going heavy with sand, besides which the elevation was over 13,000 feet. When I reached the old man I thought he was done for. But he had plenty of voice, and said he was all right. I then told him to get up on my pony and ride for a short distance. He protested violently, and eventually I had to lift him into the saddle, for he could no more have climbed up than flown up. For forty minutes I tramped it, after which I would not have walked another yard to save even a Christian minister from eternal wrath. I ordered Sinbad to get down, which he was very loth to do, and, remounting, rode forward, keeping an eye to the rear to see what happened. Kallick and my shikari, both Mahomedans, were some way behind, and I wondered what they would do to succour their brother in the faith. I vowed that if they didn't do as much as their master, never a pice of buksheesh would either of them ever see from me. But my doubts were quickly dispelled, and the holy one mounted again. And henceforward none of us had a horse we could call our own. He became a regular Old Man of the Sea who could not be shaken off. We carried him in state to Kurgan, and there I gave him some money, and escaped by making an unexpected march.

The misfortune that happened to Mir Ghulam is perhaps worth recording. He began his journey from Kashgar with forty ponies of his own, and hired twelve more from Yarkand to carry merchandise and feed. The hirer was one Nar Mahomed, who accompanied his own horses and seemed to have formed a caravan separate

from his patron. When completely buried in the mountains, far from grass for the horses and far from the possibility of purchasing feed, Nar Mahomed dropped the merchandise, and with his twelve ponies and the stock of grain, whipped round, and by a circuitous route returned to Yarkand. Mir Ghulam, travelling by a parallel route, was ignorant that he had been left in the lurch until a Kalmuck herd told him that his goods were lying by the roadside at such and such a place. Thereafter Mir Ghulam's caravan had to transport the additional merchandise upon a stock of feed that was speedily exhausted, the reserve having been levanted with by Nar Mahomed. In consequence, at the Saser Pass, no less than fourteen of his animals died of weakness.

Leaving his caravan at the pass that the remaining horses should be kept alive until he brought food for them, Mir Ghulam proceeded to Panamik, where he met me and unfolded his tale of woe. All his horses were useless for the present, and it was costing him some hundreds of rupees to obtain transport to carry his goods the remaining few stages into Leh. As a fellow-subject of the Sirkar, he called upon me to take his deposition, and with due solemnity I recorded his statement on foolscap, cross-examined his witnesses and noted their declarations, made the whole crowd swear a bloody oath, and obtained the signatures of all the official and quasi-official people in the village. The portentous documents arising therefrom I now folded up and placed in a big blue envelope, which I sealed with ceremony and addressed to the British Agent at Kashgar, with the request that he would take immediate steps to cause the Chinese Government to bring the offender to justice. Mir Ghulam then expressed himself satisfied, and everybody present bore the expression of having assisted at a righteous termination to a scandalous case. What Mr Macartney might do with the papers, and what Nar

Mahomed may have to say in defence, Heaven alone knows. But it added zest to my progress towards Kashgar to know that I was an important sharer in a case that promised to become a *cause célèbre* of these parts.

Of Ebrahim, who first offered me tea on the road, and who has since been as a brother; of the Yarkandi syce whose foot was crushed by a horse and which I cured by a poultice; of the boy with the swelling under his chin which I eased with two rupees; and of half a dozen others, what can I write that the reader who lives amidst the fleshpots would care to read? It needs hard living and plain fare to reduce human sympathies to a level that includes one's humbler brethren. Indeed it is only on the road that one can gain touch with such simple people, for when one comes to houses and Begs and Aksakals, and their hosts of followers who hasten at one's bidding, the little friends of the tent-door and the shadow of the rock are frightened away. It is one of the drawbacks to travel, too, that those whom one meets, and likes, seldom cross one's path again. It is a far cry to Asia, and I fear it will never again be my fate to visit certain remote spots where dwell some few Israelites in whom I know there is no guile.

CHAPTER XVII.

DESERT AND OASIS.

AT Sànju I heard that Dr Stein, the celebrated archæologist, was then at Khotan, a place I had wished to see but had been deterred from including in my plans, as to visit it meant adding 300 miles to my journey. But the chance of meeting a fellow-countryman, and one, moreover, so learned in all that was interesting in Turkestan, caused me to change my mind, and accordingly we hurried away from Sanju, intending to cover the distance to Khotan in quick time. This appeared to be possible, for owing to the courtesy of the Chinese officials at Sanju relays of horses were promised on the way.

Leaving Sanju in the morning, we made a hot and tiring journey of thirty miles to the oasis of Zanguia, where, after a brief rest, we resumed the march on what were said to be fresh horses. Our next stoppage was to be a place bearing the euphonious name of Pialma, and on the way thither we obtained a real taste of desert in a hot country. We were advised to travel by night, because of the heat of the day, and if we must start before midnight, when the moon arose, it were well to have a guide for fear of losing the way. I scoffed at the idea of the guide, but was overruled by Kallick, who flatly declined to budge without an escort. And Kallick proved to be wiser

than his master. The distance to be traversed was a vague quantity, rendered more vague by the efforts of my followers to translate it into terms that appealed to my comprehension. But the fact is that nobody knew how far it was. In Asia you start in the morning and you finish in the evening, and to desire any measurement more definite is sheer aggravation to Providence. By starting in the evening every living soul in the oasis knew we could not arrive before morning. Only I cherished the fond belief that by ten the march would be over, and that by eleven I should be asleep in a comfortable camp-bed with a good supper inside me.

Riding through the oasis was delightful, but the broad desert soon replaced the pleasant gardens and fields of Zanguia. At seven it grew dusk, and at half-past darkness fell upon the land, and I realised that my gallant hired steed was already a tired beast. But that is a common experience in the East, and with a sigh I resigned myself to the usual hard labour with a heavy whip. There is no other way to get these poor brutes to move, and Heaven only knows whether they sham tired or not. Anyhow they can shy and bolt when for hours they appear to have been so leg-weary as to be hardly able to put one foot before the other. As for trot and canter, after the first hour one might as well bestride a lion in Trafalgar Square, and expect to whip it off its pedestal. A poor four miles an hour is all a Central Asian horse is willing to do, and you may scourge him to ribbons without getting any better result.

The descent of darkness upon the desert is not without charm. The haze that hangs over the horizon slowly closes in like a ring of fog. The pearly light in the sky gradually pales into colourless grey, and before one realises it the stars are twinkling in the firmament. Road there is none, for the sand is not amenable. The tracks of other travellers are obliterated by a breath of

wind as effectually as the waves of the sea blot out the wake of a ship. And the flat expanse of desert, or the still more dreary gorse betufted dunes, offer no landmark to guide the footsteps. It grew darker and darker, until the white sand itself was hardly to be distinguished from the surrounding blackness. No guide in the world could steer a course on such a night, and it soon became evident that we were strayed from the true direction. Kallick was greatly exercised, and cursed our guide with a fervour he had better reserved for prayer. The unfortunate man wandered hither and thither in search of some indication of the line usually followed by travellers. Needless to say he found none, and we were reduced to the use of my compass, until the matches gave out. Then the tail of my old friend the Bear served us for a while, and we steered due east until bogged in a maze of dunes. These rose in front and behind like huge mountains, that melted under the horses' feet with magic suddenness as we stumbled across them. One side was a gradual slope of firm ground, the other a steep descent of loose sand in which our tired animals plunged and floundered. Half an hour of these ruthless hillocks and we halted, perceiving that further progress was useless. We must wait for the moon.

We dismounted and sat down in the sand, and I now realised why our guide carried a large melon with a tender care that added greatly to the difficulties of horsemanship. Kallick had also expressed anxiety about the melon, to my wonder, for they are as plentiful as peas wherever one goes in this country. I was thirsty, and a huge slice of the musky, water-logged fruit was like a draught of new life. Kallick and the guide sucked and wallowed over their share like a regiment of pigs. Then we all lay down on the cool sand, while the horses grouped themselves as near as we would let them. A wriggle or two resulted in a perfect bed of ease that

invited sleep—no mosquitoes, no noise, no glare; only the silence of the desert that holds no living creature, darkness illumined by the distant sparkle of stars, and the faintly aromatic breath of a gentle night-wind. I dug my hand into the sand beside me and marvelled at its fine and silky texture as it escaped, like water, from my closed fist. On the top it was cool and dry, but a few inches down warm and seemingly moist. It smelt sweet and clean, fit to be the couch of a princess. . . . And then it was brilliant moonlight, and the nutmeg-grater that Kallick keeps in his throat proclaimed the need to be up and doing.

We trudged heavily over the dunes for half an hour, and then reached more level ground. Here the guide struck marks which he said had been made by horsemen during the day. We followed these faint indications for some distance, and then encountered a gaunt pole sticking upright in the sand—a sign to the traveller. The track regained, our pilot was able to follow it in the moonlight, and thereafter we had no trouble. For hours and hours we waded across the sea of sand, and at daylight sand still surrounded us in every direction. The sun rose higher and higher, and the heat increased. Little whirlwinds skimmed along before and on either hand, like wild animals startled by the presence of man. The haze on the horizon grew ever upward, and finally closed in above. Gusts of wind caught up curtains of sand and flung them in our faces. The air grew hot and sultry, and we tasted the bitterness of the desert. And just as the coming storm was about to break, out of the dimness ahead there loomed a huge dark wall—the trees of an oasis! A moment more and we were in a shady avenue, our horses' feet tramping the water of a runnel, our lungs swelling to the cool and pure air, and our eyes greeted on every hand by the lovely green of growing things.

Were it not for the dry old stick that rode behind me, I could have dropped from my horse and fallen prone in thanksgiving. But Kallick being within earshot, I dare not give vent even to a song of praise. Perhaps the old rascal was glad to be rid of the nightmare of the desert, and after sixteen hours of sand to plunge into vegetation, but his dour and ugly countenance gave no evidence of his feelings. To me it seemed like Paradise after a long and painful purgatory. The dreariness and loneliness of the desert, the utter absence of life and the limitless extent of the sandy waste, the fatigue of urging an exhausted animal throughout the night and far into the hot and dusty day, had all combined to fill the soul with melancholy and hopelessness. One felt like a convict condemned for life to serve in the galleys. Want of sleep and food had dulled the nerves, and it was when longing and expectation had given way to apathy that the sudden apparition of the oasis abruptly awakened the faculties.

The imagery of the East is surely a product of physical environment. It is the Moslem world that has given us most of the colour and fancy that we attribute to the Oriental mind. And when it is remembered that the faith of the Prophet is held mostly in countries where wilderness exists in sharp contrast to fertility, we find the key to the ideas that have inspired much of Eastern poetry. North Africa, Arabia, Persia, Afghanistan, and Turkestan are Mussulman, and comparatively rainless countries that owe their cultivation to constant irrigation. These are all regions of sand, vast stretches of desert, with here and there patches of fertile ground that shine like jewels on a colourless background. It is the oases in continual contrast with desolation that stimulates Oriental imagination; the lifeless, burning wastes of sand that emphasise the charm and beauty of spreading trees and running water, of magic palaces and dark-eyed houris.

To the dweller in temperate climes it is hard to convey an idea of the oases that alone in this land are habitable. It needs a knowledge of the ghastly desert, and a taste of its bitterness, to quicken the appreciation. Riding in the haze that is characteristic of this country at all seasons except autumn, one suddenly realises that in the dust-laden atmosphere ahead there is a dark broken line, as if a range of mountains barred the way. This appearance gradually increases in size and in darkness, until unexpectedly it turns out to be a mass of dense foliage close at hand, and not hills in the dim distance. Hardly does one comprehend the proximity of the oasis than one is there, and the day's journey at an end. From absolute desert the track plunges into a narrow lane flanked with tall trees whose branches meet overhead. Beyond is a low leafy avenue, and on either side fields covered with tall green crops. Willows and poplars in double lines follow the road, and between each double line is a canal of running water. Every now and then these canals cross the road, the smaller ones in a banked-up bed through which a horse walks, the bigger spanned by rustic bridges whose wooden planks resound dully to the tramp of the hooves. Here and there are clusters of buildings, presenting to the road straight mud walls, in which open gateways permit passing glimpses of picturesque interiors. These are farmhouses, low dwellings built of mud and wooden beams, single-storied and windowless to the road, and quite devoid of architectural ambition. But the courtyards and pillared verandahs that are visible inside every gate make one long to investigate these tree-embowered and nestling abodes.

Many of the fields that skirt the way are on a higher level, so every now and then the ears are greeted by the thunder of a mimic waterfall. A small stream spouts through the hollow trunk of a tree and plunges noisily

into a pool. Such places are the joy of village urchins, male and female, who, in the clothes they were born, disport boisterously from early morn to dewy eve. Where the bridges are, there are loungers gossiping to the gentle stimulus of the murmuring water. Mothers with babes in cradles, and elder ones sprawling naked in the clean soft loess, bring their knitting here, and under the shade of the trees coo lullabies, or scarify their neighbours, according to the exigency of the moment.

Each oasis has its bazaar, a counterpart almost of its equivalent in India. But there is the difference that the Turkestan street is completely shaded by an awning of matting. Rows of shops on either side have little verandahs supported by wooden pillars, which extend upward through the roof to a height of sixteen or twenty feet. Upon these are cross-beams that support the matting, a tattered protection which here and there lets the light through and spangles the road with brilliant sunbeams. The bazaar is a dim and dusky place at first, and infinitely satisfying to eyes aching with the heat and dust of the desert. On the proper day it is a crowded and busy place, but for six days of the week it is deserted, a cool and silent aisle along which village ancients and little children proceed sedately. The shopkeepers are elsewhere, their goods carried by strings of donkeys, and in due sequence they will visit neighbouring bazaars, changing each quaint and peaceful, shady street into a scene of moving colour and a babel of contending tongues.

A Beg of pious memory has built a house at Pialma and dedicated it to the traveller. On the gate there is an invitation to enter in the name of God and make use of the house and garden, free of charge. On reaching this hospitable door our horses turned their heads willingly, and we entered a little square containing a pond fringed by trees. Having sent my baggage on

ahead, the caretakers were ready to receive me, and I found my camp-bed, chair, and table open and ready. On the latter were two flat vessels full of milk, upon which the cream lay thick and yellow. Another dish was heaped up with peaches, another with grapes, while a third held a huge melon. The peaches were a pale-green colour, and soft and velvety to the touch. With a knife I cut one in two, and put the inside of the stoneless half against my lips. A gentle pressure on the outside, and the fruit became flesh of my flesh. Cool and luscious it was, and the flavour like unto the breath of the queen of a Sultan's harem.

CHAPTER XVIII.

KHOTAN.

KHOTAN lies on one of the two great routes which in ancient times connected China with Western Asia. In the Chinese annals there are numerous references to Yu'Tien, the earliest of which I believe are to be found in history relating to the first Han dynasty (B.C. 204–A.D. 24). Yu in Chinese signifies jade, for the production of which Khotan has ever been famous, and with which its name has been connected in the literature of China from olden up to the present time. Students of ancient Central Asian history tell us that Khotan was on the road between China and the river Oxus, the neighbourhood of which indicated the natural division between what might be regarded as the western and eastern portions of the then known world. The tide of Buddhism that slowly flowed over China is known to have passed from India through Kashmir, Afghanistan, and neighbouring regions into the Chinese Turkestan of to-day, whence it continued eastward through Khotan on the southern side, and Aksu on the northern side, of the great Takla-makan, or Tarim Desert, as it has been christened by Europe. At the same time, through the Oxus country there came a current of Western influence that has left a clear mark on the ancient art of this country, evidence of which is frequently visible in the seals, pottery, and carved figures that are continually being found among the ruins of

buried cities. It is quite clear that Eastern Turkestan was a civilised country two thousand years ago, and served as a medium for the transmission of both Indian and Greek ideas to China. But it has yet to be ascertained to what extent Chinese culture filtered westward, and how much it has influenced the civilisation of Europe.

In A.D. 399 a Chinese monk called Fa'hien started from Chang-gan, in the province of Shensi, and made a journey that in these days would be regarded as no small undertaking, but which performed in ancient times was bold and enterprising to an astonishing degree. Fa'hien was an ardent disciple of Buddhism, and his ambition was to travel westward through Turkestan and thence to India, where he desired to prosecute a search for certain of the Books of Discipline, which were imperfectly represented in China. He further desired to study his religion in the country of its origin, and to visit the holy places sanctified by the birth and life of Buddha. It is interesting to note that he selected the route by which Buddhism was believed originally to have reached China. His road to the western border of China is easily traced, but thereafter it is obscure until he reached Khotan. Here he describes the town, its institutions, and geographical bearing so accurately that, although the Khotan of those days is buried many feet under sand, there is no difficulty in identifying it. Thereafter Fa'hien crossed the Kuen Len and Karakoram Mountains and landed in Northern India, his exact route being a subject of much dispute among scholars. After a long stay in India, he took ship at a point on the coast near the mouth of the Hughli, sailed to Ceylon, and from there went by sea between Java and Sumatra, eventually arriving in China after twelve years' absence. His adventures as recorded in his book of travels were marvellous, and he succeeded in bringing back many of the books of which he went in search.

Two and a half centuries later another Chinese pilgrim visited Khotan, and recorded facts which are confirmed by modern discovery. Hieun-Tsiang arrived in India by sea, and travelled through Afghanistan to Turkestan, also following the route by which Buddhism "worked its way from India to China. Scholars have been able to identify many of the places he visited, and all educated Chinese are acquainted with his travels. The next great voyager to visit Khotan was Marco Polo, and after him there came several mediæval explorers of lesser note. The first modern traveller to reach Khotan was Johnson, in 1865, since when Stein, Deasy, Hedin, and a few others have visited this most distant and remote corner of the globe.

Properly speaking, Khotan is the name of a district, and not a town. Khotan in the time of Fa'hien was an independent kingdom, since when it has had varying fortune, sometimes forming part of a larger kingdom, and occasionally existing as a separate state. At the rise of Yakoob Beg it had been independent for some years, but the Bedaulat soon enclosed it within his powerful grasp. With the fall of Yakoob Beg it passed into Chinese hands again, and is now merely a district under the Tao-tai of Kashgar. Of the several towns and many villages which compose the district, Ilchi is the capital, and this is the city marked on modern maps as Khotan. The dimension of the whole of the Khotan oasis is about 400 square miles, with a population estimated at nearly 200,000. Of these there may be 50,000 resident in Ilchi, but exact numbers are difficult to ascertain, as the population is continually moving between country farmhouses and dwellings in the town.

From Sanju to Khotan is about 110 miles, and this distance we covered in fifty hours, of which over thirty were spent in the saddle, changing horses four times. On arrival at Khotan we inquired for the Indian Aksakal,

a local cloth merchant of Bajauri descent, who represents the British Empire for emoluments that amount to Rs. 40 per mensem. Passing through several streets, we came upon one where a small crowd blocked the way. Here I was astonished to be addressed in English by a man wearing what looked like British uniform. This individual turned out to be Dr Abdul Aziz, once hospital assistant to the Agency at Kashgar, and now retired and practising medicine on his own account. Among the people who quickly surrounded us was the Aksakal, who greeted me warmly, and said he had been expecting me for months. I was deeply disappointed also to hear that Dr Stein had left Khotan for the mountains the day before, so I unfortunately missed the opportunity of making his acquaintance and hearing something at first-hand of the progress of his plans. While conversing with the doctor I cast my eyes to the side of the street, and there perceived a very stout woman sitting on the edge of a shop verandah. She it was who had attracted the crowd. She was a sufferer from dropsy, and had paid my new friend a large sum to relieve her of the hogshead or so of water that had collected in her body. The doctor, not liking to make a mess of his dispensary, had taken the good woman into the street, and there operated upon her. She was now visibly lessening, to the marvel of the onlookers and the enhancement of the doctor's reputation.

The Aksakal is the centre of the little colony of emigrants from over the Himalayas, and the doctor also lives among the thick of his kind. Some twenty familiarly clad and mannered people, who salaamed in Indian fashion and spoke Hindustani, having collected, we all moved off to the abode awaiting me, our procession arousing considerable interest among the natives as we passed through some narrow streets. At the Nar Bagh I found a bundle of newspapers and a letter from Dr

Stein, who had just vacated the same quarters. The Nar Bagh deserves some mention, if only on account of its origin, which was due to the artistic taste of Niaz Beg, the Governor of Khotan when YakooB Beg lorded it over Eastern Turkestan. Outside the city we passed along some delightful wooded lanes, and then came to a very high and uninteresting mud wall, over which showed a forest of trees. Entering a gate, we passed through a courtyard of extreme ugliness, and then into another with verandahed buildings. Approaching by a low doorway, we found ourselves first in a room with raised dais, evidently a waiting-place for servants. Through another door there was a large dim chamber latticed with wood, carved with the delicate tracery of Saracenic art. Thence through a passage we entered the garden beyond. Down a flagged walk, deeply scored with shadow, there peeped through the trees the roof of a small building, the summer-house where I was to live. Inside this dainty pavilion the floor and dais on either side were covered with the famous richly-coloured carpets of Khotan. Eight windows of lattice-work let in a pleasant light from the shady garden outside, and the scent of flowers and the twittering of birds that drifted through kindled the desire to dwell here to the end of one's days.

The minions of the Aksakal now brought in the bundles they carried and covered the table with plates, which they heaped up with sweetmeats of various kinds. A huge tray of fruit, comprising a melon, peaches, grapes, nectarines, and four different kinds of plums, immediately attracted my attention, and for half an hour I behaved like a famished wolf. The Mussulmans and Hindus from India arrived in great numbers to pay their respects to the Sahib from their own country, and I had to do the honours with tea and slices of the melon. The Mahomedans were graciously pleased to eat and drink in my company, but the Hindus would not risk their eternal welfare to

please me. But they were all charmingly deferential, and made me feel quite like a rajah in his own durbar hall. They based their homage on the fact that they were subjects of the Sirkar, and gave me the impression that they were glad to see me out of pure patriotism. In India one would smile at such an idea, but here it seems different: strangers in a foreign land, perhaps, develop sympathies that will not flourish at home.

In the afternoon we went for a ride round the town. The doctor lent me his horse, the tallest in Khotan, a handsome chestnut mare from Badakshan, with arching neck, sweeping tail, and undecided forelegs. She was wont to carry the attenuated little doctor without knowing it, but a heavy-handed, twelve-stone rider was not at all to her liking. The highly fed brutes, caparisoned in silver and rainbow, ridden by my numerous escort, were also on their hind legs, so our progress through the city indicated its inspection by persons of high rank. As we passed through the streets everybody sitting down stood up, and everybody walking pressed to the side to let us pass, whilst low and respectful *salaam-alaikums* proceeded from many bowing figures. The narrow bazaars were full of people on foot and on horseback, and in the shops a countless variety of merchandise was displayed in the open verandahs. Bakers' shops and cookhouses seemed to predominate, the latter savoury to the nostrils and appetising to the eye. Saddlers were greatly in evidence, while fruit-sellers occupied every possible niche and corner. Not a little of the charm of this quaint city is due to the coverings which shade every busy street. The pleasant half-light conceals nothing of interest, and perhaps hides much that would lose picturesqueness in the glare of broad day.

Bazaars all over the East are much alike in general aspect, and if one is to find variation it must be in the people. Turkestan in this respect is distinctly different

from anything in India, probably because the people are solid Mahomedan instead of being divided into many religions and castes. India gives an impression of gravity and inscrutability, and of poverty, which is entirely lacking here. There are no naked coolies in the streets, the colour of the people is much lighter, everybody appears to be well clad and well fed, while the emotions are freely indicated on the faces around one. The numbers of women in the streets and in the shops add no little to the colour and life, and prompt the observation that here is an eminently human and natural scene.

Fa'hien recorded that the Buddhist monks of Khotan numbered "several myriads," or so at least his translators have interpreted him. Hieun-Tsiang also speaks of large numbers, and both make frequent reference to handsome and well-appointed monasteries. But of these there is not a trace left, and throughout the oasis there is not a single building possessing architectural pretensions. The hard-burnt bricks that were common in the days of Yakoob Beg are hardly used at all nowadays, the material employed for building being mud or sun-dried bricks of the roughest description. The Mahomedan musjids that have replaced the Buddhist monasteries are nothing but miserable mud hovels, without any ecclesiastical appearance, and in which there is no furniture. Public buildings there are none, for the Yamen and barracks are the ordinary Chinese houses, without aspiration to beauty or dignity, though the style is not altogether lacking in impressiveness. So Khotan has nothing to show in architecture, and when the bazaar has been inspected there is nothing left to see, except the people, who, as everywhere else, present endless variety of type and temperament.

In addition to the bazaar of Ilchi there is what is known as the Yangi Shahr, or new city, an attachment

to all the important towns of Chinese Turkestan. Having retaken the country after the death of Yakoob Beg, the Chinese built a species of fort close to all the cities, the object being to provide a place of refuge in case of local revolt. These forts are surrounded by high mud walls, with battlements and loopholes, bastions, ditches, and other contrivances of fortification. In the event of a row the Chinese would retire inside these forts, which, though perfectly useless from a modern point of view, could easily be defended against attack not supported by artillery. The Yangi Shahr at Khotan is about 400 yards square, and the inside differs very little in appearance from the town outside its gates. There are more Chinese shops and more wearers of the pigtail, but the native population swarms, and the Chinese might find themselves in a corner in the event of a sudden rising. That, however, would appear to be the remotest of possibilities, for the country, so far as I had yet been able to discover, has no grievance whatever against the ruling power.

Hardly had I settled myself down in Nar Bagh than there arrived an important messenger bearing the visiting-card of the Amban, or Governor of Khotan. This personage's name being transcribed amounts to Che-Tajen, and was printed in large black letters on a sheet of red paper. His messenger came to apologise that I had not been met outside the city in a style befitting my dignity, and to say that the official at Sanju would be decapitated for not announcing my approach with the celerity that would have enabled the Amban to have done the honours of his town. His Excellency trusted that I would forgive the omission, and begged to know when it would be convenient for me to receive his visit. I immediately represented to the messenger that the official at Sanju had been most kind and attentive, and that it would pain me greatly

if his head should roll in the dust on my account. The envoy promised to convey my gracious intercession, and the Aksakal pointed out to me afterwards that this was only the Chinese idea of politeness. He further congratulated me upon having made the orthodox reply, and said my *izzat* would be greatly augmented thereby at the Yamen. I also told the messenger that I considered it my duty first to pay my respects to the Amban, and that I would do myself the honour to call upon him on the following day.

The Aksakal and my servants evidently regarded the forthcoming civilities with great satisfaction. Kallick said I must put on my best clothes, while Raheem, who was to interpret, rigged himself out in a style that put my own humble shooting-gear sadly in the shade. At twelve o'clock there was a big muster in the courtyard, and the Aksakal sent a man galloping to warn the Yamen that the visitor was coming. Our procession was headed by a Yuz-bashi, dedicated by the Chinese to my service while I stayed in Khotan. I followed this personage at a distance of six lengths, riding the doctor's mare, who from her behaviour must have had a whin-bush entangled in her tail. Half a length in rear the Aksakal attended me, riding a magnificent black mule that was almost hidden beneath silver plate and silken saddlecloths. Then came Raheem and a long tail of riders clad in highly coloured robes. Evidently it was business to proceed slowly and to impress the populace with the high spirit of our horses and the brilliancy of our equipment.

The doctor's mare did most of the short distance sideways, and frightened a great number of people, including her rider. The circus behind me squealed and kicked and reared to the entire satisfaction of the Aksakal, who said it was necessary for a Sahib to make a commotion when he rode abroad. Arrived at the Yamen we all

advanced to a big door, the opening of which was the signal to dismount. Passing through the gateway I found myself in a large courtyard lined with spearmen standing at attention. Several doors, one behind the other, now opened, and there appeared a vista of flagged courtyards, down which hurried with outstretched hands a beautifully dressed and beaming Chinaman. For the moment I was in terror of being embraced, and suffered a severe repetition of the shudder that came over me when, in a recent 'Times,' I read how the unfortunate Edward VII. had been kissed on both cheeks by the Emperor William. But when dressed in their best the Chinese abjure all doubtful habits, and so I only found myself cordially shaking hands with my host.

He led me by the hand through the courtyards until we arrived at the holy of holies, a small room upholstered in red and hung with texts from the Analects. Here a small table was covered with sweets, fruits, cigarettes, &c. The tea ceremony came first. The Amban took a beautiful gold enamelled cup from an attendant, held it in both hands, bowed over it like a *prima donna* with a bouquet, and then set it before me. Then he dropped six large lumps of sugar into it, stirred it, and beseeched me to drink. But having been there before I knew what to do, and I bowed over and sugared his own cup with a vigour that must have made him thirsty for a week. We now proceeded to conversation.

He had a Turki interpreter and so had I. He spoke Chinese to his, and I spoke Hindustani to mine, so it is conceivable that by the time my British sentiments were reduced to Chinese their character may have altered somewhat. All my people had crowded into the room after me, and whatever space was left vacant his attendants filled. But only he and I occupied chairs.

After the usual inquiries and answers regarding my journey we proceeded to more general topics. He asked

me why I had come to Turkestan, and I asked him what his salary was. He inquired if I was married, and I inquired his age. He said Khotan was a filthy place, and I said it was more like heaven than an earthly city. He said that the Chinese were dirt under the feet of Europeans, and I said it was only swine that trod upon pearls. He said that the Viceroy of India came next to Providence, and I said that the Emperor of China was above them both.

After that I took my leave, and he said he would return my visit on the following day. He escorted me to the gate, the while a band played, to the uneasiness of the waiting horses, who were as impatient of discord as their masters. We shook hands with great impressiveness, and I then turned to mount. Just as I had one foot in the stirrup and a leg in the air, a cannon was fired. By grace I was able to remain in the saddle, but a second thunderous discharge, and then a third, drove the horses mad with excitement, and I felt that if the salute was going to be seventeen or nineteen guns I would be quite undone. Fortunately I was not ranked higher than three, and we filed out of the Yamen with an *éclat* highly gratifying to the Aksakal, but not at all to the peace of my nerves.

We now proceeded to the barracks to call upon the General commanding the troops. The gallant officer was not quite ready, and we remained mounted while he donned his finery. In his courtyard was a prisoner wearing the *cangue*, a contrivance like a table with a hole in the centre. It takes a good deal of carrying, for the iron-bound wood is heavy, and when once fixed round a man's neck he cannot get his hands near his mouth. In the present instance the wearer had knelt down with the edge of the *cangue* resting on the ground, and his head sticking through the hole at a most uncomfortable angle, so that a little boy might

feed him with chunks of melon. While watching this piece of charity, loud clanging resounded from inside, the doors were thrown open, and we beheld the General languidly stepping forward.

The Amban was an active and energetic young man with most pleasing manners, but the scraggy and pessimistic person who now gave me a fish-like paw was quite of another sort, and he hawed and hummed to such an extent when we were seated inside that I began to think he intended to be insolent. We went through the same laborious process of interpretation as at the Yamen, and I had almost begun to be annoyed with the indifference with which questions were asked and the answers received, when the inquiry was made whether I had ever visited China. That gave me a chance, and I said that I had been in Peking a few months before, mentioning casually that I had dined with a certain personage than whom there is nobody more influential in all the Celestial Empire. That made him sit up, and when I began to reel off generals and viceroys as being my intimate acquaintances, he greatly improved in manner. We then got on the subject of soldiering, and fancying that he now had me on toast, he asked if I had ever been in a war. This time I scored a palpable hit, and he quite sat up and said he did not know I was a soldier. Having denied that soft impeachment, I explained that I had been a volunteer only for the purpose of the war in South Africa. He asked how many men I had commanded. It would never have done to confess to having been only a lance-sergeant, so with mental wonder at my own moderation I said, "A hundred and twenty—with the rank of captain!" If any member of the old corps sees this, I trust he will admit that I was exceedingly modest—under the circumstances.

My host now woke up completely, and I found him

most interested in all sorts of military matters, and with plentiful recollections of travellers who had visited him from time to time, among them Bower in 1890. I afterwards discovered that he was a great opium-smoker, and his bad manners at my first visit must have been due to his being disturbed too soon after the morning pipe. We parted on most friendly terms, and I accepted his invitation to come and inspect his troops and armoury on the following day.

On leaving I was on the look-out for a salute, having my suspicions that the gun-firing was timed to catch a departing visitor unawares. Having shaken hands with the General, I turned, grasped bridle and mane in one hand, and lifted my foot. Thus I dwelt, and sure enough, bang went the first gun. But this time the doctor's mare worked all her excitement into an empty saddle, and when she calmed down I mounted with the dignity becoming a person somewhat advanced into the sere and yellow leaf.

As already mentioned, it was evidently the thing to ride to visits at a decorous pace, but the after etiquette is quite different. No sooner was I mounted than the Yuz-bashi clapt his heels to his horse and went off like a rocket. The old mare darted after him, and in a second the whole of our cavalcade was in full gallop through the barracks, out at the gate, down a side road, and into the bazaar. The bazaar was crammed with people, but the Yuz-bashi tore through them roaring "KHUSH! KHUSH!" and laying about him with his whip in a fashion I would have deemed entirely cheerful were it not that I feared the mare would crumple up under me. The only thing I definitely remember about that ride was the spryness with which grave, white-bearded Mullahs and Hadjis took the wall as we swept by like a tornado. One old jack-in-the-box sprang right from under my horse's feet, and as we shaved past him my foot and stirrup, with

a loud crack, split the end three feet of his floating robe.

The Amban was to return my visit in the morning, so I spent all the forenoon dressed in my best kit, which all happens to be hot and woollen. Prior to his arrival he sent me a sheep, two ducks, two fowls, a sack of rice, and a lot of other things. The General sent feed and forage sufficient for a squadron. I hoped they would come quickly, but the Amban arrived just as I was half through my frugal meal, and in no good humour owing to the heat of the day and the abominability of Kallick's cooking. The Amban came in a beautifully decorated cart, preceded and followed by spearmen, bannermen, trumpeters, and suchlike, who did not move in a body but spread themselves widely across the road so as to occupy all the space possible. The Amban was very pleasant and bright; and having exhausted the usual polite conversation at our first interview, we were able to talk upon general topics, subject of course to the interpreters, who always seemed to manage that questions were many laps ahead of answers. I ended the visit rather gracefully by taking the Amban's photograph on a film that I afterwards discovered had already been exposed twice. Not long afterwards the General came. Raheem had been cleaning my battery, and the General spotted the Mauser lying among the others, and said he had lately received 500 similar weapons for the rearmament of his men. When I saw them they turned out to be Mausers right enough, but they were dated '86, and bored so that I could get my thumb into the muzzles.

My visit of inspection to the barracks was not without incident. Having examined all sorts of quaint and old-fashioned weapons, kept in admirable order, I was shown half a dozen old cannon, taken from Yakoob Beg's army at the reconquest of the country. These had all been cast in Turkestan by natives of India, many of whom

had joined the Bedaulat's army and risen to considerable rank. These were mostly mutineers, who after '57 thought it wisdom to adopt a new home. Shaw, the first British visitor to this country, made the acquaintance of several such in 1868, and makes some interesting references to both them and some Kashmeri soldiers held in bondage by Yakoob Beg. Having seen rifles, pistols, and revolvers sufficient to stock a theatre, I next desired to photograph the troops in parade order. I was introduced to five junior officers, and found them most genial fellows, but quite unable to manœuvre their men into position. The General's command is supposed to number a battalion of 400 odd, with 100 cavalry. But all that could be mustered were about 40 infantrymen, and doubtless the pay of the missing ones is devoted to charitable purposes. Nevertheless these 40 with their tall flags and spears and blunderbusses caused me a severe pang.

When I had placed them with much personal labour in the order I desired, I looked for a place from whence they might be suitably pictured. One side of the parade-ground was a very high wall with loopholes close to the top. That wall was the very place, and the Amban's pipe-bearer volunteered to show me the way up, it never entering my head but that there was a rampart behind the parapet—else why the loopholes? But when we climbed above the gateway I discovered that my wall had nothing behind it but a sheer drop of twenty-five feet. Also, that it was nothing more than a very thin construction of mud that was very crumbly on top. The pipe-bearer asked from where I wanted to take the photograph, and in dismay I pointed along the wall to a place fifty yards away. To my horror this youth, instead of understanding that the physical difficulties were insurmountable, immediately darted from my side and trotted along the wall to my point, and then turned and waited for me.

The top of the wall was just ten inches broad, and visibly cracked, and as the little pipe-bearer had run along it several lumps fell to the ground with loud flops. Nevertheless the pipe-bearer, the General, the five officers, the forty soldiers, and the hundreds of onlookers, were waiting, and I must needs traverse that wall or disgrace my country. And so I made myself into a Blondin, and I trust the gentle reader may never be called upon to endure such agony as the picture of the parade-ground cost me.

CHAPTER XIX.

ANCIENT KHOTAN.

THREE days of Khotan satisfied me, and we prepared to bid adieu to Nar Bagh. I paid farewell visits to the Amban and the General, and heard to my disgust that they both intended to escort me a few miles out of the town, and that preparations were already made to that effect. Now if one is to be escorted in style one must be clad accordingly, and if one is to be rigged out in style there can be no comfort on the road. My intention was to set forth in shirt-sleeves and a very ancient nether garment, and lacking certain accessories without which one would hardly appear in official company. Starting off in such an unencumbered fashion I hoped to ride through the afternoon, evening, and night, and so cover about eighty miles by morning. It was hard work choking off their Excellencies; but having warned them of the effect of the afternoon sun on their complexions, and of the check to public business which their absence would entail, I prevailed, and was persuaded to accept instead a courier from the Amban and a couple of mounted soldiers from the General, so that I might travel in honour and safety.

The Aksakal and his following were not to be got rid of so easily, but as the shirt-sleeves would do for them I did not mind. The doctor on his old mare, and my friend of the road, Hadji Raheem Sha, also joined in.

The Hadji, immediately on his arrival at Khotan, had sent me a huge basket of pears that out-Jargonelled anything I had ever eaten, and also invited me to a collation at his house, which I found to be surprisingly comfortable and well-appointed. I proposed matrimony to his little granddaughter, which breach of Mahomedan etiquette greatly tickled the other guests. We set forth at two in the afternoon, and rode through the bazaar and out at the western gate. Here sitteth the daughters of Eve who offer instalments of the delights of Paradise to weary travellers. I have yet to mention that the women of Khotan have looks far beyond the common, and that their milk-white skins and flashing eyes make them desirable throughout all Turkestan. But of that more anon; for the present the reader must be content to know that they smiled sweetly upon our party as we fared forth upon our long ride of 240 miles to Yarkand.

Three miles out of the city we came to a sort of rest-house, richly carpeted, and furnished with chairs and tables. Here the Chinese had meant to entertain me to a tea, cake, and wine banquet preliminary to bidding me a final farewell. I now separated from my friendly escort from the city, the parting with the aged Hadji savouring of the tragic, for he would not grant the possibility of our meeting again in Paradise. The courier rode in front and made the pace, I followed with Kallick, and the two soldiers formed a rearguard. Early in the journey these latter rode with considerable dignity, but when they began eating melons I thought they might as well return. So I presented them with a coin apiece, and bade them go back and tell their lord that owing to his courtesy I was travelling forward in much peace of mind. This rash statement brought its own reward, for a few minutes later my horse stumbled on to his nose, upon which he

scraped along for nearly twenty yards. He then recovered, and I fancied the saddle was further forward than it ought to be. But thinking it of no importance I rode on, until we came to a canal with rather a steep bank. Here my Bucephalus put his head down to drink, the saddle slipped over his withers, and I shot into the canal. The horse immediately turned and bolted back to the city, with Kallick and the courier after it. Wet and dirty, I remained alone by the roadside, wondering how many years it took to make a really complete horseman. In my predicament I came in for a good deal of sympathy from a little flock of children, who marvelled to see me sitting in the dust, horseless and servantless, and much the worse for wear. I suppose they thought I must have dropped from the clouds, for they went and told their father, a white-bearded mullah, who came out of a neighbouring house and offered me fruit and consolation. He wanted me to enter his dwelling, and I might have done it if there had been any chance of setting eyes on the mother of a beautiful little boy and girl that clung to either of his hands. But the ladies of a Mussulman household are not for the gaze of the Giaour, and so I decided to remain where I was. After an hour or so my horse was brought back and we proceeded on our journey.

A little to the south of the road, about seven miles west of Ilchi, are the remains of the ancient city of Khotan, now a village called Yotkan. Until about 1870 Yotkan existed without there being any indication that underneath lay the ruins of an old town, but now the artificial canal from the Karakash, which irrigated the fields, began to cut deeper into the soil, and in a short time formed a considerable ravine. At the end of this ravine some villagers then discovered gold in small flakes, and immediately began washing operations. These were so prolific that the fame of Yotkan quickly spread abroad

and numbers of gold-seekers appeared, the Governor of Khotan also employing large parties to dig and wash. The digging and washing required an increase of water, and the augmented canal cut deeper and deeper into the soft soil until the sides of the ravine in which it flowed showed perpendicular banks 25 or 30 feet high. By this time it was discovered that the cutting was taking place upon the site of an ancient city, many indications of which were visible on the sides of the ravine. Fragments of pottery, little images, and coins were found in large quantities, and digging operations were extensively prosecuted. The ruins apparently covered an area of about half a mile square.

Most of the rivers that flow into Chinese Turkestan from the south bring down gold in quantity that frequently pays to wash. But the dust found in this manner is totally different from the tiny flakes that alone are obtained at Yotkan, and the character of which puzzled many of the early visitors to Khotan. Curiously enough, the most reasonable explanation of the presence of gold in a form unknown elsewhere is to be found in the *Travels of Fa'hien*, who distinctly states that the splendid Buddhist temples and monasteries which he saw in 400 A.D. were richly overlaid with leaf-gold. It is now believed that the finds at Yotkan are nothing but the disintegrated remains of the precious metal which ornamented buildings and images at the time they were visited by the celebrated Chinese pilgrim. The only weakness in this explanation is that it suggests a lack of cupidity on the part of the ancient inhabitants of Khotan which has never been deemed a characteristic of humanity, in any part of the world or at any stage of its history. We can only suppose that the succession of wars which accompanied the religious revolution resulting in the substitution of the Moslem for the Buddhist faith caused the death of those most interested in Buddhistic institu-

tions, and that in the establishment of the new religion the value of the habitations of the old were forgotten.

Until lately it has been generally supposed that the burying of ancient Khotan was due to a tremendous flood which overwhelmed the city and forced the removal of the site to Ilchi. Dr Stein, however, very effectually disposes of that theory by pointing out that the continual irrigation of land by water discharged from the alluvial regions to the south must have had the effect of gradually raising the level of the ground. Silting up is a process that results in great changes, and when continued throughout a period of considerably over a thousand years it appears satisfactorily to account for the accumulation of many feet of soil upon the ancient site of Khotan. Dr Stein clinches his argument by drawing attention to the burying-places in this country, which are frequently found to lie far below the general level. Not being subjected to irrigation they remain at the original level, while the surface of the surrounding fields gradually rises. The same process is abundantly evident in the paths and roads which almost invariably are much below the surface of adjacent ground.

Dr Stein does not pursue his argument to what would appear to be a logical and very significant conclusion. In the case of ancient Khotan, lying some twenty feet below present levels, we must admit that special causes resulted in its abandonment. The continuous and bloody wars that preceded the permanent establishment of Mahomedanism probably originated in a new city adjoining the old fort that still exists beside Ilchi. The unpopular and unprofitable neighbourhood of the Buddhist town was speedily deserted for the busier Mussulman city, and ancient Khotan quickly crumbled up and became the sphere of the agriculturist. The silting-up process then combined with the weather to obliterate all trace of what was once a city. But the action of the canal which has

recently exposed the ancient site is suggestive of what has happened in the past at other places. When their canal began to sink the villagers of Yotkan were compelled to make new arrangements for the irrigation of their land, and this could only be done by tapping the main river at some higher point, and by the consequent lengthening of their canal. Now if the silting up of cultivated land is continually going on, it follows that the supply of water must require frequent readjustment by new canals bringing water from a higher level and from a greater distance. A time must come when cultivation along the banks of the new canals will lead to desertion of land adjoining the old canals, and it is fair to reason that there has existed a general tendency for the oases of Kashgaria gradually to work upstream, leaving deserted settlements behind to be absorbed in the desert. A glance at the map of this part of the world compiled by Dr Stein, and appearing in his book, 'The Ruined Cities of Khotan,' confirms this idea in a remarkable manner. Every one of the places at which Dr Stein discovered buried ruins is to the north of the present road, and downstream from present cultivated areas.

By evening we reached Zawa, the westernmost village of the Khotan oasis. Here there was a long delay in obtaining fresh horses, and it was ten o'clock and pitch-dark when we set forth to cross the thirty-five miles of desert that separated us from Pialma. Remembering previous experiences in the wilderness I inquired about the risk of getting lost, but was assured that the Beg who did courier knew the road with his eyes shut. Nevertheless, when we came to the octroi station outside the village my friend the Beg woke up a row of sleepers with his whip, and ordered one of them to come along and show the way. There was much vehement grumbling, but the written order of the Amban dare not be ignored, and two sleepy rascals joined in—you don't catch a Turki

going anywhere by himself in the dark. In half an hour we were hopelessly lost, and it took us two hours to find the road again. But in the darkness we ran up against Kaptar-Mazar, a place of sanctuary for many thousands of pigeons, kept up by offerings and an allowance from the Chinese authorities. On my way to Khotan, when I heard of the pigeons, I ordered the gun out, having ever in my mind the needs of the pot. But Kallick was horrified at the idea of shooting them, and explained that the pigeons had been there for hundreds of years and were regarded as sacred.

The story of their origin is interesting. A Mahomedan king, advancing eastward against the Buddhists of Khotan, fought a bloody battle in which thousands were slain on both sides. Needless to say which side won, but when it was all over it was impossible to distinguish dead foes from dead friends. Thereupon a holy warrior lifted up his voice in prayer, and behold ! the faithful bodies miraculously collected themselves on one side. Next there appeared two doves, who searched among the dead and picked out the remains of the king, whose burial on the spot created a place sacred for ever after. The holy birds remained and multiplied exceedingly, being abundantly fed by the charity of travellers. Dr Stein states that the Chinese pilgrim Hieun-Tsiang, who passed through about 650 A.D., relates a similar story of which the heroes are rats. When a great force of Huns were invading the land, and there was no possibility of checking their advance, all the rats in the countryside collected and during the night ate up the harness and leather of the accoutrements of the invaders, thereby effectually stopping their march. The rats were duly sanctified by the people, and carefully cherished as a reward for their services. Hieun-Tsiang describes them as being as big as hedgehogs, with hair of a gold and silver colour, but declares them no longer

visible to the human eye. The spot to which the Chinese pilgrim ascribes the rats corresponds almost exactly to the present location of the pigeons, and suggests how hard dies local legend, with whatever religion its origin may be connected. It also suggests that in Turkestan, as elsewhere, men are mostly liars, though it must be admitted that to change only from rats to pigeons in twelve hundred years argues no unreasonable degree of mendacity.

From the home of the pigeons the road was partially staked, and with occasional wandering from the track we managed to proceed. The two men commandeered did a bolt at the sanctuary, which was foolish, for I had decided to reward them for the loss of their night's rest. The march across the remainder of the desert was very long and wearisome, and broken only by the encountering of two wells, each about 200 feet deep, containing so little water that it is reserved for human drinking only. Crawling along over the endless sand the mind wanders in a manner that makes one tremble for one's sanity. Everything sensible is thought out and exhausted in a very few hours, and thereafter one falls into the way of talking to oneself and imagining the strangest doings. I suppose it was the intolerably slow pace that set me thinking of steeplechasing, and other matters that entailed dash and speed. Mentally I won my first Grand National by a short head after a most desperate finish. The triumphal tittup back to the enclosure, the weighing in and ensuing cheers, were only equalled by the satisfaction of the next Monday's settling. After the successful ride at Aintree I took to lowering the motor-bicycle record between London and Edinburgh. But I soon broke my neck at that game, and returned to chasing. How many more Nationals I won—always by a head, for it is impossible, even in dreams, to forget the handicapper—I cannot now remember, but my career on the turf only ended with

the dawn of day, which showed the trees of Pialma oasis in the distance.

The journey from Pialma to Yarkand is distinguished by much desert and very little oasis. From Guma to Karghalik there are no less than sixty solid miles of sand and gravel, broken only by a few wells and a tank, the latter filled from a distance by a small canal allowed to flow with water one day in each week. It was at the tank caravanserai that I heard there was a Russian officer in occupation. I was indignant to find that this personage had occupied all the rooms for distinguished travellers, and left none for me except those in an outer courtyard. I made a really Anglo-Saxon commotion, and eventually an apartment was emptied and allotted to me. While preparing to turn in during the heat of the day, I was astonished to hear good English spoken outside my door, and on going out to investigate found that the Russian traveller resolved himself into a British officer and a German archæologist. The latter was Dr Von Lecoq of the German Archæological Expedition, and the former Captain Sherer, a gunner from Quetta. After two years of research in Central Asia Dr Lecoq was returning to Europe with thirty boxes of manuscripts and antiquities rescued from the buried ruins of Kuchar. His nearest road lay through Russia, but he wasn't going to risk his precious boxes in the middle of a revolution, and preferred to transport them all the way over the Karakoram Pass to India. Sherer had been shooting in the Pamirs, after which he had visited Kashgar and made the acquaintance of the learned doctor. The two had joined company, and were now *en route* for Khotan prior to setting forth over the mountains.

The pleasure of meeting one's own kind and talking one's own language after nearly two months of abstinence is not a thing to be despised. One reads of the aloofness of the Britisher and his distaste for acknowledging

strangers even in the remotest corners of the globe. But that sort of thing is an affectation entirely of the past, if indeed it ever existed, which I very much doubt. Anyhow there was no ceremony about my new friends, and we had several hours of what to me was soul-satisfying talk. The doctor told me about his finds, and Sherer about the shooting, while I expatiated upon the horrors of the passes they were about to cross. We had lunch and tea together, and then I continued on my way.

CHAPTER XX.

YARKAND.

OWING to a storm that forced us to take shelter during the following night, we reached the Yarkand river after dark, when the boatmen declined to cross. The stream was wide and very fast, and could not be forded at this time of the year. The huge ferry-boats, however, are expeditious and very well handled, so in the morning we crossed without difficulty, horses and all. The river looked really nasty in some places, and the heavy boat rocked ominously, but six lusty fellows poling from the broad stern quickly shoved her out of danger. The seven miles from the river-bank to Yarkand we covered at a canter, and we soon found the Aksakal in the bazaar. As I had hoped, there was a huge bundle of mails for me, and I wasted no time in establishing myself in the quarters prepared by the Aksakal and getting to work on my piles of letters and newspapers. It is worth going through something and being shut off from the outside world for many long weeks in order suddenly to encounter an accumulation of correspondence and news. While escorting me to the garden where I was to live, the Aksakal, Rai Sahib Bhuta Ram, told me he had heard of my approach, and with eighty compatriots had ridden out to the river to meet me the night before. They had all been greatly disappointed at my non-arrival, and would have turned out again in the morning

if they had known I was coming. While sitting in the Aksakal's little house I was besieged by natives of India coming to salaam. They seemed delighted to see a Sahib, and paid me more attention than if I had been a Lieutenant-Governor on his own midden.

It is useless any longer to conceal from the reader that Chinese Turkestan is in some respects a disappointing country. Having now seen Khotan, the most ancient, and Yarkand, the largest city of the New Dominion, I am compelled to admit that there is little of interest to be seen. The chief thing lacking is architecture of any kind whatever. Every building is built of mud, or sun-dried bricks with a mud plastering. A very few houses of hard-burnt bricks are encountered, but even these are quite devoid of architectural pretension. In Yarkand there is a large gateway that once formed the entrance to an important musjid, now disappeared. But this gateway, about fifty feet high, and the tallest building I have yet seen, shows the crudest possible ornamentation and the roughest of workmanship. Nor is there any evidence that in former times matters were much different. The two Chinese pilgrims to whom I have frequently referred certainly write of magnificent buildings at Khotan, but when one recollects that China itself is almost utterly wanting in architectural ambition, it is not difficult to understand that these early travellers were easily impressed, and that height and gaudy colouring were probably sufficient to excite their admiration. At the same time, it is possible that during the Buddhist regime buildings of a more pretentious character existed, but if so their construction must have been of the flimsiest; for not a trace of them remains. Within the limits of known history, which goes back for two thousand years, there is no evidence to show that anything more permanent than mud and wood were employed in even the most important

erections. Stone is procurable in illimitable quantities from the adjacent mountains, and it is proof of the transient nature of the oasis that it is never used. What profit to transport granite and erect a fine building when the encroaching sand or a deflection of the water-supply may one day compel its evacuation? Yet while there has never been any opportunity for the development of architectural art, there is in this very circumstance the implication that the shifting desert which has made permanent buildings impossible conceals priceless relics of the past. These seem unlikely to include the palaces and public buildings that give an air of reality and human interest to history in other parts of the world, but of other forms of art what may not the moving sands cover? So far the surface only has been scratched, and the reward has been rich and significant of a high degree of civilisation. European archæologists have not made Central Asia a hunting-ground without good reason, and it is well within possibility that this region will yet witness discoveries of extreme importance to the fascinating study of the origin of nations.

Yarkand has a population which the most reasonable estimate makes 60,000 souls. On bazaar day every one of these turns out into the streets and mingles with the thousands that come in from outlying districts to trade or make holiday. The dim aisles of the bazaar are packed tight with people, and progress on horseback is almost impossible. They are neither noisy nor drunken, and breaches of the peace seldom occur. But the colour of their clothes, the infinite variety of type, and the verve of the whole scene are things to be remembered. The contrast between the gravity of long-bearded, long-robed, and sanctimonious Hadjis and Mullahs and the gaily clad women, veiled and unveiled, is entirely pleasing to one's æsthetic soul. A decent Mussulman of

mature years is the very epitome of respectability, worthy of being matched in this respect against any cottar of bonny Scotland. It adds to his picturesqueness that he has four wives at home, and that probably ten times as many have passed through his hands in the course of his matrimonial career. What a knowledge of the sex that argues, what a sequence of romances! No wonder that he strokes his beard with an air of comprehending all things, and with the suggestion that he has drunk the cup of human experience to the very dregs.

Down the crowded bazaar comes some petty Chinese official, representative of the dominant race, a figure as important here as the white man in India. He is preceded by horsemen, who clear the road shouting *Khush!* to the well-clad and giving stick to the ragged. The mask-like face of the opium-smoking Celestial, his fine clothing, and his powerful horse are entirely foreign to the scene: he represents another part of the world where there is more character and intelligence than in Turkestan. The Kalendar is another feature of the bazaar. He clears a corner for himself, and then declaims in a loud voice his allegiance to the Almighty; more oft he declares himself in league with Providence; while the people who ignore him are characterised as setting themselves against the Divine will. He makes a fair living, partly owing to his pertinacity and partly because people give him a trifle on the chance that it may stand to their credit in the hereafter. Beggars have their own corners from which they bawl appeals to the charitable in the name of Khoda. They mostly suffer from deformity or disease, and are generally people one would not care to meet in a lonely place or after a St Andrew's dinner.

The bazaar differs little from that of Khotan. The shops are somewhat bigger, and there is more cheap

Russian trash in the way of coloured boxes, looking-glasses, beads, and suchlike. But the *tout ensemble* is exactly the same, from the fruitsellers to the matting that gives grateful shade. In one side-lane I visited a silk-reeling establishment. I had never before seen silk being dealt with in a raw state, so cannot compare the Turkestan methods with those of other countries. But the arrangements here struck me as highly ingenious. From a cauldron of boiling cocoons a man gingerly picked out the protruding ends of the silk and hitched them on to a spinning bobbin worked by a large fly-wheel. How connection is maintained with the threads and the large roll that gradually accumulates upon the axle of the fly-wheel I could not see exactly owing to the dim light and the smell of the cooking cocoons. From the first roll the silk yarn is transferred to successive bobbins, one after the other, drying and becoming clean in the process. In the end there is a huge hank of white or yellow thread, now ready for export or local manufacture. Most of it goes to Andijan in Russian Turkestan, but in years of high prices in Bombay there is a heavy export to India. Last year silk to the value of over 6 lakhs of rupees passed through Ladakh from Khotan to Yarkand. The value of a pony-load of raw silk is something like Rs. 1200. When the cocoons have been boiled and robbed of the results of their labour, they are thrown aside in a heap and allowed to rot. The ensuing stench would make a Chicago meat-packer faint.

Silk and carpet manufacture is a much cleaner and sweeter business. Having seen silk made in several parts of China, particularly in Canton, I was not impressed with the methods or with the results at Yarkand. The workers are given patterns to follow, but their powers of reproduction are very limited, and the results contrast unfavourably with the exquisite

fabrics woven in China. Carpets are made in the same manner as at Gyantse and Khamba Jong in Thibet, but as I do not know how they are produced in the West I can only remark that the process here is slow but effective. Khotan at one time used to be a famous place for carpets, both on account of the fine quality and the beauty of the patterns. But in recent years aniline dyes have been exclusively employed, with the result that colours fade or wear in a very short time. The large Russian demand has also ruined whatever of artistic taste the natives once possessed, and the glaring and inharmoniously coloured carpets now manufactured are both ugly and inferior. I saw some mats made twenty years ago, before the heavy foreign demand had manifested itself, but after the introduction of the aniline dyes. The patterns in these were exquisitely delicate, but here again the colours had all faded. In Khotan it is still possible to get very fine silken carpets made, but only by incessant watching of the work; and having made one carpet, they cannot be trusted to make another the same, either in pattern or quality.

A feature of Yarkand is the number of tanks which adorn it. These are said to be over a hundred, and as they are surrounded by trees and the quaint little balconies of Mahomedan architecture they are certainly picturesque. They are kept full by canals which are occasionally turned on, but there is no outlet, and the water is stagnant. People wash clothes here and pitch in debris of all sorts, with the result that they are nothing but traps for every variety of microbe under the sun. Within the memory of man none of these tanks has ever been cleaned, and if an antiquarian wants a field of operations I recommend the drainage and excavation of one of these city dumping-grounds.

A notable export from Yarkand is *charas*, a narcotic

made from hemp, and identical with the *bhang* of India and the *hashish* of Arabian countries. The resin having been collected is mixed up with the pounded leaves of the plant, the proportion of pounded leaf being the degree of adulteration to which the finished product is subjected. Having been packed in bags of raw hide, and become as solid and heavy as stone, it is ready for export to India. In the Punjab it is in high favour, and does as much damage there as cheap gin does in White-chapel. Until recently *charas* to the value of 3 lakhs of rupees per annum was exported to India, where a duty of Rs. 2 per seer was imposed on its import. But the Hemp Drugs Commission cast an evil eye on *charas*, with results already discussed. In Turkestan, in consequence of the action of the Indian Government, there was a slump in the commodity, and heavy stocks were spoiling in the hands of the dealers, for *charas* loses all its strength in a year. How well it is that the unrighteous should not always prosper. In Chinese Turkestan *charas* is very popular, and drives a good number of natives to the devil annually. They smoke it with tobacco or have it made up into sweetmeats. There is a small duty on it locally, but not enough to hamper consumption.

Until some years ago India returned the diabolic compliment with interest by exporting to Chinese Turkestan large quantities of opium. But in recent times the increase in 'production of the Chinese article has enabled it to compete with the heavily-taxed Indian product, besides which it is now largely grown in Turkestan itself. And so there is no longer any import of opium from India, a fact to rejoice the pious. The odour of opium-smoking once smelt is absolutely unforgettable. Now and again, while passing through the bazaars of Khotan and Yarkand, I got a familiar whiff, and wondered whether it was less agreeable than the

reek of stale ale which flows from the door of our own simple inn. The Russians won't have *charas*, or opium, or any such things at any price whatever, their import into Russian Turkestan being entirely forbidden. Nor will they have Indian moneylenders—which two prohibitions prove that they mean their native subjects to be moral. Noble Muscovite!

CHAPTER XXI.

KASHGAR.

FROM Yarkand the journey to Kashgar is characteristic of all travelling in Central Asia, little oasis and plenty desert. The distance is about 140 miles, and we covered it in fifty-two hours, arriving at Mr Macartney's house in Kashgar at dark. Altogether we had covered the 380 miles from Khotan in nine days, of which one and a half were spent in Yarkand seeing the sights. Over a hundred hours in the saddle, out of a possible hundred and eighty, is no joke when a man can number grey hairs in his beard, and after three months of solid toil between Simla and Kashgar it was a real joy to enter a civilised household. I had received a letter on the road inviting me to stop with the Macartneys, and when I met with a warm welcome from my host and hostess I felt like spending the rest of my days with them.

The Macartneys have a wing of their house in the garden, and the suite of rooms therein is reserved for travellers. I occupied them with some diffidence when I heard that predecessors had been such as Younghusband, Sven Hedin, Deasy, Stein, besides princes, lords, and others either of high degree or world-wide fame. The first meal with my newly found friends was a dream for a palate long scarified by the atrocities of Kallick. Glass and white linen, silver and a shaded lamp, were table furnishings the existence of which had long passed from

my mental ken. A smiling countrywoman at one end of the board and a host with a white collar at the other made me rub my eyes in doubt. But the kindness and attention bestowed upon the travel-stained *voyageur* soon dissipated his incredulity, and the reality of the situation settled into his soul. Has the reader ever been deprived of potatoes for three months? Childhood and manhood had developed in me for the simple *pratie* a real affection, which in this last year or two of travel has been augmented to positive adoration. Why, I hardly know, unless it is that I have a brother who has recently gone to live in Ireland. The passionate tenderness for the potato, however, is a living feeling, and when first, after so long a blank, I poised on my fork a new one, small, round, fragrant, and delicate, my emotion could hardly be controlled. Ye dwellers in Egypt, ye know not the sweetnesses of your own fleshpots!

Kashgar has no distinctive features worth recording. It is just the same as Khotan and Yarkand in appearance, while the people dress and talk alike, though perhaps there may be some little variation in type. The goitre, which is so prevalent in Khotan and Yarkand, is seldom seen here, but the people are not so good-looking, particularly the women. This goitre is a curious disease, attributed to the quality of the water, but the cause of which I understand is still a scientific mystery. At first sight the tremendous swelling on the neck is very repulsive, but when every third adult is found to be thus afflicted one becomes accustomed to meeting it. It gives no pain, nor is there any sore upon it, and the objection to it is merely on account of its unsightly appearance and the inconvenience of having—so to speak—a millstone around the neck. The swelling is frequently as large as a melon, and is usually situated in the neighbourhood of Adam's Apple. There is a village near Yarkand where every grown-up person suffers from it, and where it can

truly be said of the inhabitants that they are a stiff-necked and goiterous generation.

Apart from natives Kashgar has a considerable foreign population. The Chinese Tao-tai, or Governor, of Kashgaria has his headquarters here, besides the usual local officials, while the total Chinese number perhaps seven hundred. Next in numerical strength follow natives of India, of whom there are settled about a hundred, including Afghans, who are pleased to class themselves as British subjects for purposes of consular protection. Andijanis and other people from Russian Turkestan are hardly to be counted as foreigners, for they belong to the same race and speak the same language as the natives. Then among Europeans there is the Russian Consul and his office staff, plus a Cossack guard of sixty under a lieutenant. The Russian Custom House is manned by three European officials, and the agency of the Russo-Chinese Bank by a manager and five clerks. A Swedish mission consists of three men and two ladies, shortly to be augmented by reinforcements from Sweden. Finally there are the Macartneys, with governess and two children. Quite a community, though unfortunately, owing to the difference in language, there is not much social intercourse between the Russians and the rest.

Kashgar itself is much smaller than Yarkand, and of much less commercial importance, though politically it is the hub of Kashgaria. The population numbers about 30,000 altogether, so the city is no great matter. Architecture, again, is conspicuous by its almost complete absence, the only buildings worthy of note being the archways fronting some of the musjids.

The European dwellings, however, are neat and comfortable, the gypsum, a substance like plaster-of-Paris, found in the adjacent mountains, proving an excellent substitute for lime plaster. The Yamen is a combination of Chinese style and the local materials, and the

architectural effect has no merit beyond that of quaintness.

Chini-Bagh, where the Macartneys live, is situated on the edge of the southern bank of an important branch of the Kizil-su, and commands a fine view of the flats that immediately border the river. Below my quarters was a stretch of melon-beds, in this season densely inhabited by watchers of the ripe and ripening fruit. These careful people live in lattice huts festooned by the yellow-flowered vegetation of the calabash, or gourd. They sleep all day, and render all the night hideous by their hoarse warnings to thieves. Sometimes they lift up their voices in praise, while betimes they sing lewd songs, and curse the wickedness of human nature that compels them to sit up all night to guard their property. The *chowkidars* of this country also attract attention at nights. They go their rounds beating a hollow stick and calling upon the Prophet. If they were seriously after burglars one would imagine they would move silently, but the fact is they themselves are afraid of the darkness, and must make a noise to keep their courage up—it is much better to frighten a thief than to corner him. Other night-birds are the half-witted, who frequent the mazars or burying-grounds, and yell defiance to the Powers of Darkness. At one end of Chini-Bagh is a favourite mazar, and on a spur of loess nearly opposite the windows is another. The latter is now disused, and the earth is slowly subsiding, so that the sides are continually showing skulls and bones of departed sinners.

The river-bank is surely the most interesting place in Kashgar. Here come horses and donkeys and camels to water, and women bring clothes to wash. The *dhobie*, as we know him in India, is also a frequenter of the river-side, and though he has the cruel board that ruins linen, he is a gentle creature, and brings down the uplifted garment with a soft swish that does no harm. For a

copper boys take your nag into the fast stream and are swept down into the shallows, riding astride or standing up on the horse's back. The people are continually fording the river, mostly mounted on some kind of animal. But occasionally there is a little party of women and girls on foot, and then up come all their loose garments, and there is a great view of rounded limbs and satin skin. It is a terrible dilemma for them when they meet a foreigner in midstream, but the desire to keep their clothes dry is generally stronger than the shock to their modesty. Occasionally there is one nag to a father and family who have to cross, and then the little ones sit before and behind their parent, and cling to him like limpets until the danger is past.

Some five miles from old Kashgar is the new city, an institution already mentioned as being characteristic of all the important towns in the country. Here do congregate the majority of the Chinese residents, making for themselves a corner that might be of China itself. This is the fortress that would protect the ruling race in the event of rebellion, but the barracks of the 1200 or so of garrison are outside the walls, and there is little indication that military force is deemed a necessity of the situation. But near the new city is a temple to the glorification of a military hero. Liu Ching-tang was the warrior who reconquered the country from Yakoob Beg and his sons in 1877, and his grateful compatriots have honoured him with a shrine wherein is set the great man's picture—a faded photograph! But they honour his memory in more material fashion, for the sons and relations of the defunct general have the pick of all the appointments in Turkestan, no small concession when it is notorious that they are an opium-smoking, illiterate, ignorant lot. There is nothing remarkable about the temple itself, but upon the wall—built in Chinese fashion across the front of the gateway, to prevent the entrance

of devils—there is a drawing of great verve and exact execution. A foreign traveller of distinction asked if it was an illustration of the Chinese idea of plague prevention. The microbe certainly looks much abased by the rudeness of the dragon.

After the long journey from India, and the double marches in the desert, I was only too glad to rest peacefully at Kashgar, and to assimilate an atmosphere that for old-worldness and tranquillity would be hard to rival. My door faced the garden, and each morning I stepped out in slippers and pyjamas to pick my own grapes and peaches, to eat with the morning cup of tea. Afterwards a cigarette smoked under the trees gained a new and subtle aroma, to which was added the permeating scent of flowers and fruit, and the murmur of the little canals that ran hither and thither about the feet of the trees. Early morning in the month of September is perfect in Kashgar, cool, yet warm enough for flimsy attire, bright and sunny, yet everywhere that marvellous summer symphony of green and gold that is the joy and salvation of tired human eyes. Then birds twitter busily, bees hum like distant thunder, the ducks in a pond quack lazily and sleepily; and a tilt of the eye brings into view the silver strip of river on its band of yellow tree-fringed sand.

John comes to say that breakfast is ready—he does it in English, though his colour is like midnight. He is a man with a history, and with a romance that is now on the wane. He was born in Ceylon, and enjoys the patronymic of Fereira, a name redolent of Portuguese adventure of bygone days in the golden East. Some rakehell merchant sailor must have joined himself to a gentle Cingalese, and founded a family that generation by generation slowly reverted to the type favoured by environment. John is a native in appearance and an Asiatic in temperament, but in spirit he has thrown

back to the roving blood of his bold forefather. He is a wanderer, else he had never come to Chinese Turkestan. As a ship's steward he saw much of the world, and during his travels took service with a British officer, whom duty eventually brought to Kashgaria. There were two years to be spent in this outlandish country, and John, according to local custom, took unto himself a wife.

Noorhan, her name is, and I saw her every day in the garden cooing and playing with a tiny daughter of the house. She is slim and quick, has large swimming brown eyes, and a drooping mouth that opens easily to let out the flash of white teeth. To my mind she is an exquisite creature, though others say she has high cheek-bones and is afflicted with a wilful and selfish temper. Anyhow, John took her, and the next thing was that her mother was set on a donkey face backward and hunted through the streets by the populace—for John was a Kaffir, and it was a sin for a Mahomedan woman to cleave unto such. John rose up in wrath and went to the Kazi, who awarded damages. Nevertheless, for the sake of domestic peace John embraced Islam, no great hardship, for he admitted that when occasion arose he usually professed the religion of the country in which he happened to be living. But John's master went away, and with him John. Money was left with Noorhan, and promises of return.

John resumed wandering, went to England, and was there made much of by the maids in the houses which his master visited. But his soul hankered after Noorhan, and when he heard of a shooter of big game who was bound for Central Asia, he begged to be taken—and so came once more to Kashgar. Now he is factotum to the Macartneys, and Noorhan serves in the nursery. But the Macartneys take leave to England in a year or two, and then John goes hence, no more to return. He is

saving diligently to provide for Noorhan, who perhaps is secretly rejoiced at the prospect of a change of husband and the immediate expenditure of John's money on a set of golden ornaments. Indeed, I have reason to know that she has no fears for the future.

My host, though already a Chinese scholar, is a great student of Celestial literature, and to him daily comes Wang, a clerk presently out of favour at the Yamen. Under the trees in the garden there is a seat and bench, and every afternoon John makes ready a huge Chinese dictionary and a few volumes of plays or poetry. Wang expounds to his employer with the dignity and assurance that sits so well on the educated Chinaman, though perhaps Wang is not so much of a scholar as his bearing would suggest. They walk under the trees, and placidly discourse upon philosophy and its bearing upon life, upon theology and its relation to love and being—at least that is the impression I receive, for I cannot understand what is said, though I sometimes like to walk with them and listen.

At the tinkle of the tea-bell Wang is visibly enlivened, for he takes readily to the English way of serving the fragrant leaf, and finds the scones and cakes entirely to the taste of his palate. One day he was moved to confession, and related how he had come to be employed in his present occupation of tutor. He was out of work, had no money, and was on the verge of starvation, when he decided to pay a visit to the temple and lay his case before the gods. He did so with much fervour and humility, and was returning through the streets when he met Mr Macartney, who straightway engaged him to come and study every day. Piety brings its reward in Turkestan, as elsewhere.

Having taken it easy for ten days, and discussed Chinese Turkestan until Macartney began to regard me as a nightmare, I took leave of my kind host and hostess

and went to dwell at Shumal Bagh, where I hoped a more Spartan style of living would encourage resumption of work. Shumal Bagh is a garden near the Macartneys, and when I went to see the owner, a Hadji of much sanctity with a full complement of wives and several of children, he said his own family was occupying it, and that he was sorry he could not oblige me. Mentioning my disappointment to Macartney, he sent a servant over to the Hadji to see if matters could not be arranged. The servant, the trusted jemadar of the Agency, has the diplomatic instinct fully developed, for when the Hadji continued obdurate, he marched straight to the Chinese Yamen and pointed out the disgraceful attitude of a man who would not give up his home to a Sahib. The Chinese regarded the matter as treasonable, and sent a myrmidon to turn the obstinate out, neck and crop. Then the jemadar returned in triumph and said the house would be ready for my occupation that evening. Hearing of the arbitrary manner in which the arrangement had been made, I then proceeded to my new house and compromised with the owner—I to have the front rooms and garden, he to retain the back rooms and an orchard at the side.

And so the next morning I found myself established. The entrance was down a shady lane through which flowed a small canal. Then up an alley and in at a gate, and you are within the compound. Two rooms with a large verandah between them served for my own quarters and a kitchen. In front was a small canal circling round the garden and ending in a pond deeply shadowed by trees. Near the pond was a large pavilion with blank sides open to the breeze, and commanding a view over fields beyond. There were flowers and fruit and vegetables galore, and a large field of lucerne which gladdened the souls of two horses that I had recently bought. I breakfasted, lunched, and dined in my

verandah, and sometimes did a little work. But charming surroundings are not the best stimulant to mental labour, for there is no doubt that dead walls and an empty view inspire the finest flights of imagination.

What a man may eat in Kashgar is worthy of description. Breakfast may consist of kidneys, fresh fish from the river, egg and tomato rumble-tumble, honey, butter, cream, and tea or coffee. Lunch may include beef, mutton, pork, chicken, or fish, with any of the puddings that abundant eggs and milk make possible. A sultana-cake at tea-time, and at dinner—this is one of my recent events—

Soup, à la Jardinière.

Fish Pâté.

Beef Olives.

Potatoes, Spinach, French Beans.

Peach and Apricot Tart, with Cream. Calf's-foot Jelly, with Cream.

Grapes, Peaches, Melons, Almonds, Raisins, Pistachio Nuts.

Café Noir. French Rolls.

The ingredients of everything mentioned may be bought in the bazaar, and only the tea and coffee are not indigenous to the country.

Such feeding hardly reads Spartan, but it really was while Kallick was accountable for my cuisine, for he would ruin the simplest of the mercies of Providence. But Kallick one day made free with my loose cash, not for the first time, though I never could be certain, and I packed him off and got rid of his rascally countenance for all time, I hope. It was Saduk Akhun who was responsible for the menu I put before my guests—two French travellers who could not speak English, while I knew no French—and as he is a man with a history, I must describe him. His father and mother were Kashmiris, but he was born in Khotan. He began life with property, but spent it all, and became cook to Macartney

many years ago. He did well for a time, and then began to indulge in *charas*. After a few days' disappearance he would return from his low haunts in the bazaar and challenge everybody to fight. Then being punished for turbulence, he would find a sword and threaten murder. Being dismissed by the Macartneys, he took service with the Russo-Chinese Bank. There he remained for some time, until one particularly outrageous deed resulted in expulsion. Then Stein tried him in the desert, and there he ran amuck and terrorised the whole caravan. For some years he had been scraping a living in Yarkand by keeping opium-dens, *charas* shops, and even less savoury places, when I came along and, ignorant of his character, engaged him. When Kallick fell into disgrace, Saduk Akhun was promoted from the stable to the kitchen, and thereafter I lived on the fat of the land. My French guests declared that they had never dined so well out of Paris, and for myself I had never before known what luxurious living meant. There was the drawback that I had to lie at nights with my finger on the trigger of a loaded rifle, for if Saduk went on the rampage nobody's life was safe.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TURKOMAN AT HOME.

THE native of Chinese Turkestan bears little resemblance to the native of India, either in colour or physiognomy. The ethnography of the Turkoman is a difficult subject, and not over-interesting to those who do not make a special study of such matters. What interests most people in the world is to know how their brothers and sisters in other countries live and look.

In Mahomedan communities opportunities for observation are limited by the seclusion of women and the consequent privacy of home life. When abroad women wear the veil, and a more tantalising obstruction to human sight it would be hard to imagine. Contrary to practice in most Mussulman countries, there is here a good deal of latitude in the use of the veil. A woman comes towards one unveiled, and apparently indifferent to the gaze of a streetful of people; but when she catches sight of the approaching Giaour, up goes her hand and down comes the veil. This objectionable garment is fixed to the front of the cap, and may be thrown backward over the head or allowed to fall over the face. It is made of net, with holes so small that nothing can be seen from outside, but big enough for the lady behind to examine the passer-by accurately and attentively. Thus to be criticised, without the power to return the compliment, is gall and wormwood to the

male Briton not yet reached the age of threescore and ten. Still there are ways of circumventing this unnatural contrivance. One method I discovered by twisting in the saddle and looking backward as I approached an unconscious veil. A sudden turn when within range generally revealed the face of the owner taking a good look at the foreigner when she thought he could not see her. It would be interesting to know, psychologically, why the plain ones dropped their veils instantaneously, while the good-looking ones dwelt long enough for eye and cheek to transmit a thrill.

On the whole the women are handsome, while a few would make Solomon turn in his grave and sigh for a thousand and first. They are as tall as the women in England, and always have black hair hanging down their backs in plaits. Their eyes are black, brown, hazel, green, and grey, and the last colour, with jet eyebrows and a skin like milk, are the kind that are responsible for the breaking of Commandments. They have no figures in Chinese Turkestan, owing to the clothes. These, for a lady, are a long flowing cloak, generally black, lined with green or blue, very graceful, and used for riding or walking abroad. Beneath that is a long-sleeved chemise of coloured silk reaching to the ankles. It is very loose and shapeless, and fits close to the neck, where one side has buttons, to let the wearer in and out. Below the chemise are wide trousers or pyjamas, almost invariably of red cotton print or gaily coloured silk. These two garments are the general wear of a lady in her own home in summer, plus the cloak when she goes out. In winter she duplicates and triplicates each of them indefinitely, all generally being lined with fur or sheepskin, according to her means. For headgear men and women wear a neat little cap of worked silk, of all the colours under the sun. Boots are curious. They are made of soft claret-coloured leather that has all the

appearance of Russian. These come up to the knee like a man's riding-boot, but have neither heel nor thick sole. But in addition to the boot there is a shoe of strong leather, with sole and high iron-tipped heel, into which the soft-booted foot is thrust when the wearer goes out. The trousers go into the boot for convenience in riding, which is always astride. On horseback a woman looks very attractive, her dainty feet in big stirrups and her flowing robes tucked well around her. I ought to mention that they generally wear a loose streaming piece of white muslin over the head and secured by the cap, and, of course, the inevitable veil, which is very often none too clean. Earrings do not appear to be worn, or much jewellery except rings.

The dress of a man is of the flowing-robe order, and its details are not of much interest. His boots are exactly the same as the women's, the heel of the overshoe not so high or pointed, while the shoes themselves are about four times the size. The women have very tiny feet. The silk cap universal in summer is changed for a variously shaped headgear lined with fur in winter, and sheepskin and fur are added to the clothing. Men always grow a beard when they can, and a long white one is a sign of great respectability. The word *Aksakal* means greybeard, and has arisen through the custom of giving men of age and dignity the representative offices. The beard is important in etiquette, for when saluting friends and superiors it is stroked with much solemnity. Turkomans are extremely polite, and their manners graceful and attractive. Even the humblest are ceremonious in their intercourse, while social amenities in the shape of dinners, tea-parties, and evening fruit-feasts are freely indulged in by all classes.

The matrimonial relation sits very lightly in Turkestan, as indeed it does in most Mussulman countries, despite the injunctions of the Prophet. Here, however, they are

easier than perhaps in any part of the world. The law allows four wives, and to the letter of it all decent men adhere. But they entirely disregard the spirit by continual change. It is quite usual for an old man of high standing and good reputation to admit to having had thirty or forty different wives in the course of his career. Some men, of course, have so many that they lose count entirely. A considerable proportion of the women have an average of ten husbands during their comparatively brief period of good looks. The marriage ceremony and its preliminaries are similar to those in most Mahomedan communities, and the knot is tied by the Kazi. The woman receives a trousseau from the bridegroom-elect, and various articles of jewellery, of value according to the giver's means, and these remain her property thereafter. Without her consent a wife cannot be taken from one city to another, nor may she be chastised without fault. The husband may not take another wife without her consent, nor must he undertake a journey for six months after marriage. If he then goes travelling, he must leave her money sufficient to live upon for six months. She must be allowed free intercourse with her own family and relations.

Divorce costs threepence. It is only necessary for either party to mention the matter to the Kazi, and he makes out a ticket declaring the marriage dissolved. It takes three months and ten days for a woman to be free to contract a fresh alliance, but the man can reconstitute his harem in forty days. The facility of divorce sometimes leads to interesting procedure on the part of the lady. Having secured clothes, jewellery, and perhaps dowry, she quarrels with her husband and invokes the aid of the Kazi to free her. She now goes off to another city, and after the expiry of the period mentioned makes a new marriage, including further trousseau, jewellery, and dowry. Again she quarrels

and divorces, this time removing to a third city with two releases in her pocket. By producing the first letter of divorce she evades the period of waiting and marries at once. The process is repeated *ad infinitum*, and in the course of a few years this interesting madame has accumulated a competence against old age. Now she marries the man of her choice, and lives happily ever after. But to play this game you must have the jet brows, skin of milk, and starry eyes.

When a child is born a lump of sugar is put in its mouth, doubtless to give it a sweet temper. A boy is signalled by feasting, but a girl causes no demonstration. The mother nourishes the child for a few days, after which it goes to a wet-nurse if the family is well-off. That the mother may preserve her figure, a sheep is slaughtered and the still hot skin, prepared with alkali, bound round her body. This remains on for a day and a night after the birth, when it contracts firmly and restores the original slimness of the waist. Until weaned the child is kept in a cradle, where it is fixed so that it cannot roll or move a limb. A hole in the middle of the cradle and bedding obviates the necessity for constant attention, and the baby is only taken out of its bonds at feeding-times. Its head is pressed tightly on a little hard pillow, with the design of keeping the occiput flat. They don't like a bump behind in Turkestan, because it prevents a girl's hair falling gracefully down her back. Boys are circumcised, after consultation of the stars as to the day, before the assembled women of the family, neighbours, and friends, the occasion being celebrated by a feast. Boys and girls go to school kept by the Mullah, at the age of four or five. Boys sit on one side of the room and girls on the other, while the teacher stalks about in the alley between. They learn to read and write and to gabble prayers. At ten the education of the

girls is completed, but the boys go on and may eventually reach the Madrassa, or college, where they are taught theology, law, metaphysics, history, medicine, and other matters as sensible as the Greek and Latin of our own public schools. At the finish their knowledge of things practical is nil.

Caste prejudice is entirely absent in Turkestan, and a man may pursue any vocation he likes without reference to that of his father, and he may marry in circles above or below his own. People eat every sort of food except pork, which is forever unclean in Moslem eyes. They have beef, mutton, fish, and fowl for meat, and eggs and milk and vegetables galore. Rice is much used, but they are also great bread-eaters, and their biscuits are excellent. Ragouts, bouillis, and soups are favourite forms of cooking, while salads, pickles, jelly, syrup, and jam are common. Tea is the universal drink, with sugar but without milk. Milk and cream are much used, and, of course, fruit in season is eaten day and night without ceasing. Alcoholic liquor is seldom drunk, nor is tobacco much used, these milder vices being supplanted by the use of *charas*.

Houses, as already mentioned, are invariably built of mud, generally sun-dried into soft bricks. Wooden beams support corners and ceiling, and the latter is upheld by light cross-pieces covered in with mud. Every room has a chimney much in our own fashion, with chimney-piece and fender. The houses are very rough as a rule, but they are most comfortable in summer, being dark and cool. In winter they are distinctly cold, but with a good fire and plenty of clothes one can be comfortable and cosy. In a country where there is practically no rainfall, the question of building is of course greatly simplified, and a plain mud erection makes a good house. Occasionally there is a burst of rain, and then there is much damage done. But a

bucket of mud and water mends the leakage cheaply and effectively. All houses have little roofed verandahs, on which are spread the large and nicely coloured numdahs of the country. Here sit the women at their sewing during the day, and the men with their cronies in the evening. Trees are everywhere, and the twitter of birds incessant. The Turkis are great musicians and have several instruments, among them the zither, mandolin, cymbal, and flageolet, the last equal to any penny whistle that ever rendered ears a curse. It is said that the women are fine dancers, but as they only perform within their own family circles I was not privileged to witness their skill. One thing that must not be forgotten, and which contrasts strongly with India—the voices of the women are feminine, and not raucous, and it is a pleasure to hear them talking and laughing and singing in dulcet tones. They are much given to playing with their children, and appear to be fond enough of them, though with the frequency of divorce a great deal of separation takes place. Children in this country are like fruit, very easy to come by, and perhaps they are valued accordingly. The little ones are sometimes very pretty, with fair hair and blue eyes, which fade into deeper colours as they grow older.

Besides a good deal of social intercourse, people amuse themselves in a minor degree with chess, draughts, and cards, but they do not gamble, so far as I have heard, like their over-lords, who carry their taste for tempting fortune to extreme lengths in Turkestan. Children have marbles and dice and knucklebones, and play with kites and at rounders. Grown-ups do a little partridge-fighting, but their only active sport is a game called *ulak*, played on horseback. A mounted man with a slaughtered sheep at his saddle-bow dashes off, followed in hot haste by all the players, who try to take the sheep from him. As the Turkomans are often fine horsemen, there is a

lot of lively work, and daring feats are performed in the endeavour to gain possession of the unfortunate sheep. The game ends when the sheep is torn to pieces. It is strange, in a country where horses are plentiful and riding proficient, that there is no racing or polo, particularly as the abundance of sandy ground affords good going. But for the Sport of Kings they told me it was necessary to wait until I reached the mountains, where the Kirghiz keep and train horses specially for flat races of inordinate length.

It can hardly be said of the Turkoman that he is a credit to humanity. He is cheerful and sanguine about the future, peaceful by nature, and fairly honest. But he lacks enterprise and character, and is incorrigibly lazy. On every hand are contrivances for saving labour, and he never walks a yard if he can help it. Even the beggars have each a tiny donkey, with a stomach like a balloon and a voice like a fog-horn, upon which they ride to and from business. The application of water to the ground results in soil of extreme productivity, and if a man cares to work it is easy to become rich, especially in these days when the Russian demand for cotton and silk offer a market for the produce of labour. But our friend only cares to fill his belly, after which he is content to sprawl and watch his wives at house-work. Nor are the better halves more worthy than their masters. To be a woman here is to be a rake, and it is only lack of beauty that prevents perambulation of the world, gratification of the flesh, and a general playing of the devil. Indeed, a handsome woman lives a roaring life in Chinese Turkestan.-

CHAPTER XXIII.

PHYSICAL AND HISTORICAL.

CHINESE TURKESTAN may reasonably be described as a country bounded on three sides by mountains and on the fourth by a desert. Of the former the best known are the Pamirs, which occupy the south-west corner, and indicate where meet the Empires of China, Russia, and Great Britain. Running due east from the Pamirs are the Karakoram and Kuen Len ranges, the latter inside Chinese territory, and stretching right across Asia almost to the shores of the Pacific Ocean. Running north-east from the Pamirs is a series of ranges dividing Chinese and Russian territory, and including the well-known Alai and Thian Shan Mountains. The height of these mountain-ranges is so well known that it is unnecessary to do more than emphasise the fact that their higher levels are covered with eternal snow, from which emanate innumerable glaciers. The level of the Tarim Desert, which bounds the eastern side, is somewhere in the neighbourhood of 3000 feet above the sea. The natural consequence of this combination of great height and adjacent low level is that the mountain systems mentioned drain towards the desert. Strictly speaking, the Tarim Desert reaches right up to the foot of the encircling highland regions, and it is only because of their drainage that Chinese Turkestan exists as a habitable country. Cut off the water that flows from the melting snows, and

in twelve months life and vegetation would completely disappear. The rainfall seldom exceeds two inches in the year, falling chiefly in the months of May and August. So insignificant a quantity upon a sandy soil devoid of vegetation, where humidity is almost non-existent and where the summer heat is of scorching character, is, of course, almost useless from an agricultural point of view.

Chinese Turkestan is thus dependent upon its rivers for irrigation. These rivers are independent of local rainfall, for they flow from the surrounding mountains, whose glaciers and snowfields are unaffected by climatic variations at lower altitudes. Given, then, the heat of summer, and the water-supply for the plains is assured. In many respects Chinese Turkestan resembles the northern part of India, but it possesses the great advantage of being free from the danger of famine, that curse of all countries whose food-supplies are dependent upon the bounty of the clouds. And this difference gives rise to the characteristic feature of the physical aspect of all Turkestan, for the Russian as well as the Chinese portion of Central Asia is governed by similar conditions. Central Asia may be described as one immense desert of sand scored by river-beds. And only where rivers flow is vegetation possible. Thus we have a country of oases surrounded by wilderness. Wherever there is a river its banks are thickly populated and highly cultivated. A large river enables irrigation to be carried inland from its banks for considerable distances, as in the case of the Kizil-zu, which waters the plain of Kashgar. Here we have an oasis about forty miles long and thirty broad, some of the breadth, however, being due to the fact that several small tributaries join the greater river in this neighbourhood. Nothing perhaps will give a clearer idea of the physical aspect of Chinese Turkestan than a statement of the following figures, which show

that the total area of the country is nearly 350,000 square miles, of which only $1\frac{1}{4}$ per cent is under cultivation, or about 4500 miles, including all the oases down to the smallest, which cover only a few acres. These rich and fertile spots, again, lie in a belt at the feet of the various mountain systems which have been referred to as forming the northern, western, and southern frontiers.

The streams watering Chinese Turkestan flow mostly from the higher of the surrounding mountains. Of these, the Khotan and Yarkand rivers from the Karakoram, Kuen Len, and Pamir mountains, and the Kizil-zu from the Alai, are the best known. All are joined by tributaries of various importance, and, together with minor rivers from the northern frontiers, flow north-east and amalgamate in the Tarim, which loses itself in the marshes of the great inland lake known as Lob Nor. Eastward of the sources of the Khotan river, that portion of the Kuen Len mountains dividing Thibet from Turkestan pours northward numerous streams which lose themselves in the sand of the desert. The same may be said of the mountains from which debouch the large rivers. It is only where a great volume of water is concentrated that a river is formed strong enough to outlast the calls of irrigation, the heat of the sun, and the aridity of the sand through which it flows. One of the marked features of travelling in Chinese Turkestan, then, is the fact that one is continually crossing desert which intervenes between the various oases.

The climate of this curious country is like that of most regions remote from the sea. In summer there is intense heat and in winter great cold. At Kashgar there are recorded temperatures of 104 degrees in summer and 8 degrees below zero in winter, while other parts show still greater cold. Humidity is practically nil, while high wind, raising clouds of dust, prevails for nearly three-

fourths of the year. From May to August the mean maximum is nearly 90 degrees Fahrenheit, and travelling in these months is almost unbearable by day, owing to the accumulated heat of the sand, which, reflected and added to that of the sun, saps the energy of the wayfarer in a manner that is experienced in few other parts of the world. Myriads of flies of every conceivable species render the jungles and marshes adjoining the rivers places of torment during these months, and altogether Chinese Turkestan is far from being desirable in summer. Winter is dry and cold, high wind rendering outdoor life extremely unpleasant. Snow falls sparsely, and seldom remains on the ground for more than a week. Occasionally the winter season passes without any fall taking place. By December all still water is frozen over. Autumn, however, is delightful, for then the wind and dust-storms cease, temperature falls, and air and sky become clear.

Compensation for many of the drawbacks to residence in Chinese Turkestan exist in the prolific nature of the soil and the variety of its products, induced by plentiful irrigation. Fruit is of high quality, and includes many kinds known in Europe. Apricots are most plentiful, and may be picked on the roadside from trees that grow wild. Grapes, peaches, apples, pears, cherries, dates, pomegranates, melons, figs, mulberries, plums, and walnuts abound, while tomatoes, pumpkins, cabbage, beetroot, beans, and many other vegetables, are freely cultivated. Maize, barley, wheat, rice, millet, and peas are among the cereals, while cotton, hemp, tobacco, and the poppy provide crops for commercial purposes. Silk culture is widely carried on, and wool affords material for considerable manufacture.

Eggs, fowls, milk, cream, and curds are universal where there are inhabitants, and the domestic animals are camels, horses, yaks, donkeys, mules, cattle, sheep, and goats. The mountains contain many varieties of big

game, while tigers, wolves, wild cat and wild boar may be encountered in the woods and jungle grass bordering the rivers. Birds of many varieties inhabit the air, but only five different kinds of fish are found in the waters. Tarantulas, scorpions, and centipedes abound on the riverbanks, and ticks, gadflies, midges, and mosquitoes are so overwhelming in the jungles that in summer they force even wild animals to take refuge in the desert.

Coming to population, there is an end to all accuracy, for Chinese Turkestan has entirely escaped the censor, and the idea of counting the people is obnoxious to the authorities, owing to the increased revenue that the knowledge of the true numbers might exact from Peking. But from various calculations that have been made by people qualified to form an opinion $1\frac{1}{2}$ million is a fair estimate, and there is no doubt the actual numbers are somewhere between that figure and $1\frac{1}{2}$ million, though the official Chinese estimate is only 1,200,000. Thus, taking the area of the country at 350,000 square miles, we find that some five people inhabit each square mile. But when it is remembered that the population is concentrated upon 4500 square miles, this proportion needs rectification, and supplies a further illustration of the physical peculiarity of a country inhabited on the oasis principle. In reality there must be 350 people to each square mile, demonstrating most remarkably how rich and fertile is the soil of an oasis in contrast to the absolutely bare and barren ground which surrounds it.

Ninety per cent of the total inhabitants are Turkomans, 3 per cent Mongols, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent Kirghiz. Although the Chinese own and rule the country, the number resident is only 6000, or .4 per cent, while British Indian subjects number only a few hundreds. Various other varieties of Central Asian natives make up the balance of 50,000. All these people live in oases except some 100,000 nomads, who wander about the grassy foothills

of the great mountain systems, living on their flocks and herds, and occasionally cultivating small patches of cereals. The Turkoman is a rich mixture of the aboriginal inhabitant of this region and the Arab, Mongol, and Chinese conquerors who have overrun it from time to time. The proximity of the once prosperous states of Bokhara, Samarcand, Khokand, Andijan, &c., has also contributed towards the Turkoman blend of blood, and the result is a person of no nationality, and no patriotism except towards that condition of affairs which leaves him well alone.

Chinese Turkestan is a province of a Viceroyalty of China proper, and the part which I have been discussing as bounded by mountains and a desert only represents half of that province. Authority from Peking is delegated to the Viceroy of Shen-kan, who passes it on to the Governor of Hsin-Chiang province at Urumchi, under whom are four Tao-tais. One of these personages is responsible for all that part of Chinese Turkestan which has any connection with India, and under him there is a whole hierarchy of officials who administer the country. Instead of revenue gravitating towards the Chinese exchequer, I understand there is an annual deficit in the budget of the Viceroyalty which includes Turkestan, and that the rest of China has to fork out to keep Shen-kan on its legs. Whether Kashgaria contributes to the deficit or not it is impossible to say. Chinese authority is supported by a large army, composed of cavalry, artillery, and infantry, equal to two divisions of troops. So at least a Russian statistician has placed on record. What numbers are actually paid for by the Chinese Government nobody knows, but it is fairly well understood that the total troops in the country do not exceed 2000. But whatever the strength of the Chinese army of occupation, it appears perfectly adequate for the maintenance of order and the preven-

tion of rebellion. It is generally regarded as impossible for any internal movement to displace Chinese rule, while it is equally well understood that against outward aggression there is no possible defence.

Perusal of the literature relating to this part of the world gives an impression of corruption, robbery, and tyranny that, if it were true, must have resulted long ago in overthrow of Chinese power. The mere fact that China holds the country with a trifling garrison proves that the people on the whole are satisfied with her rule. Books dealing with the subject are mostly in the Russian or English language. Those in Russian naturally magnify the horrors of Chinese oppression, with the view of justifying possible action by Russia in the future. The ordinary British writer, unacquainted with Oriental character and Eastern methods of government, is perhaps the last person in the world qualified to form a just estimate of the system that prevails here. Imbued with the belief that the Anglo-Saxon idea of state management is the most advanced, and indeed the only one worthy of consideration, he can only see in Oriental systems opportunity for disadvantageous comparison. He forgets that the grand object of all government is social content, and that it is menace from outside that is the greatest factor in conducing to internal efficiency. We pride ourselves upon our government, but if it were not a concern run on the latest business lines, from where would come the funds to support army and navy? In other words, we run a highly complex and infinitely practical machine with the object of procuring means for the preserving of our domestic comfort. The Chinese object is precisely the same, and if Chinese government achieves such degree of social equilibrium as satisfies the people by patriarchal methods, what in the world does it matter what the methods are? If the methods were out of line with the temperament of the people, the

people would not be satisfied, and the form of government would be a failure. It is because Chinese methods are not distasteful to the inhabitants that China rules a foreign country and a foreign people practically without any backing of physical force.

The earliest historical references to Chinese Turkestan are to be found in the Annals of the Former Han Dynasty (B.C. 206–A.D. 23), from which it is clear that parts of the region now generally known as Kashgaria were under Chinese protection in the first century B.C. In those Annals mention is made of a variety of imperial officials stationed at a town that Dr Stein identifies as Kashgar, and there are references to the trade which appears to have existed between China and ancient Bactria *viâ* the Turfan road, the northern of the two routes joining China and Turkestan.

The traveller Chang Ch'ien, who made his famous journey in the years B.C. 139–127, gives us an interesting series of glimpses of ancient Kashgar, and indicates that it was a convenient and important emporium for goods designed for transport between the Far East and the Roman Orient. The Chinese hold on Turkestan continued in various forms until early in the second century A.D., and the Annals contain the statement that Buddhism was established for the first time in A.D. 120, information that lacks confirmation from other sources. About the second century A.D. Huns appear to have displaced the Chinese in Kashgaria, though the latter continued to hold the Lob Nor region. Up to the seventh century the country was the scene of considerable religious activity, for there are records of Zoroastrians, Nestorians, and Manicheans, while Buddhism had obtained so strong a hold that Khotân boasted a hundred monasteries. At this period a Thibetan king invaded Kashgaria, and not long after a Mahomedan ruler swept eastward to China, despite which phenomena the Chinese

appear to have continued paramount in Kashgaria. Thereafter nomads of various kinds ruled the country alternately with the Chinese and the Mahomedans until the advent of Genghiz Khan in the twelfth century. That conqueror in his progress westward absorbed Turkestan, and appears to have laid a light rule upon the inhabitants. Tamerlane is the next great name that we encounter, and he seems to have laid waste the land in that thorough and effectual fashion which makes a recrudescence of trouble impossible.

For some centuries we have Kashgaria the scene of religious wars between different sects of Mahomedans, intervals between giving nomads and Chinese the opportunity for a brief spell of power. In connection with this period I note that Sultan Said, a direct descendant of Genghiz Khan, was a great warrior, and that after several successful campaigns he took upon himself to invade Thibet. With 5000 men he succeeded in reaching Lhasa and capturing it. My sympathy with this hero becomes involved when, on the way back, he died of the rarity of the air at the Karakoram Pass. In the middle of the eighteenth century the Chinese asserted their power and obtained a firm footing in Kashgaria, which lasted until early in the nineteenth century. They kept an army of 30,000 or 40,000 men stationed among the big towns, and actually began to contemplate the conquest of the Khanates of Western Turkestan. This ambition appears to have been defeated by a general alliance which included the then Amir of Afghanistan. In 1827 the Khanates took the initiative and occupied the greater part of Kashgaria, until the Chinese in 1830 made peace. Some years later, however, Mahomedan adventurers appeared on the scene, and we have some fearful massacring by both sides, until, in 1857, the Chinese again re-established themselves. In 1861 broke out the great Mahomedan rebellion

in China, and the insurrection soon spread to Kashgaria, the population of which was practically all Mussulman. One by one the Chinese forts fell into the hands of the rebels, until, in 1863, the defenders of the last one, Kashgar, heroically blew themselves up to avoid inevitable capture. The Mahomedans now regained power, and for a few years fought among themselves until the appearance of Yakoob Beg, a notable figure in Central Asian politics, and a personage whose history is worth some attention, both on account of the character of the man and because his doings directly interested the Indian Government.

Yakoob Beg had a humble origin, for his earlier days were spent as a dancing-boy. His sister making a good marriage, however, the youth found himself lifted out of his original surroundings and given a chance in life. And he took it with a vigour that proved the boy a very father to the man. Writing from recollection, Yakoob Khan entered the commissariat service of the Khan of Khokand, and in a short time had proved himself so capable that he was given the command of the forces of that potentate. But the billet was no sinecure, for the moment was that when Russia had got among the Khanates like a fox in a hen-roost. The old-fashioned organisation of a native Turkestan army had no earthly chance against breech-loading rifles, and Khokand was smashed. Yakoob Beg made a stout resistance, and it required a second expedition under the brilliant Skobelev to give him his quietus.

Reverting to the situation in Kashgaria consequent upon the rebellion of Chinese Mahomedans, I have already remarked upon the position in 1863, when the last of the Chinese garrisons was making a great stand at Kashgar. At this point a notable of Central Asia, called Busruk Khan, came to Kashgar as ruler, with Yakoob Beg as his Commander-in-Chief. Elsewhere

the Chinese had been completely vanquished, and in Yarkand, Khotan, and other cities Mahomedan rulers had arisen, all ambitious of obtaining supreme sovereignty over the country. These upstarts feared that Busruk Khan, with such a doughty henchman as Yakoob Beg at his back, would prove too strong if given time, and so while the Chinese still held out in the citadel they each sent armies to crush the newcomer. Yakoob Beg, with the discernment of a general, took his enemies in detail, smashed the smallest of the armies, and then with his successful troops turned upon his most dangerous opponents, an allied force from Yarkand. The beginning of the battle went against him, but at a critical moment he sent his cavalry round the Yarkandi flank, disorganised the impending attack, and finally routed the enemy. Yakoob Beg is said to have been wounded three times in this fight, and to have concealed his condition lest his men might have been discouraged. Pursuing the defeated army to its base at Yangi Hissar, he soon took that place by storm, thereby making his master supreme in Kashgaria. In remembrance of past favours, he communicated news of his victory to his old employer of Khokand, who had got his head above water again, and was making another struggle against the Russians. Along with letters he sent a present of nine Chinese damsels. But Alim Kul had come into his last inheritance at the hands of the Russians, and never got letters or present. There is no record of what became of the damsels, and it is no use troubling about them now, for they must be well stricken in years.

Yakoob Beg returned to Kashgar, and by means of his great reputation, and no small degree of treachery, gradually pushed Busruk Khan into the background. In 1867 his designs had prospered to such an extent that he was able to declare himself master of all Kashgaria

under the title Khan Bedaulat, or the Fortunate One. Various combinations were made against him, but he crushed them all, and by a series of campaigns greatly extended his borders. It was while at the height of his fame that he became an object of interest both to the Indian and Russian Governments. Those were the days when we were very timid of Russia, and when we looked with much alarm upon her steady and apparently irresistible advance into Central Asia. We were bolstering up Afghanistan on the north-west frontier of India, and it was a question whether it was not worth our while to forestall further Russian movements by entering into an agreement with the Bedaulat. Russia at the same time was in doubt whether to fight Yakoob Beg for his possessions, or to make friends with him. Policy, and the danger of incurring responsibility across the natural boundary of mountains which divides Eastern from Western Turkestan, decided the Russians to abstain from interference with Yakoob Beg. Presumably the Indian Government then dropped all idea of an alliance with the Bedaulat, for when his hour came we had nothing to say in favour of him or his heirs.

But Yakoob Beg, in spite of the energy of his disposition and the strength of his character, suffered from the usual Oriental failings, and these were gradually beginning to find him out. His army was mostly mercenary, and much behind in pay. His rule had been harsh, and his successes marked by cruelty and the confiscation of property. While engaged in victorious campaigns which brought loot to his followers all went well; but when the inevitable Chinese army of reconquest became imminent, he had few real friends among people or troops. His army, bold enough in offence, with nothing to lose and everything to gain, had no heart for defence, coupled with the risk of

Chinese retribution, which heretofore had been entirely Oriental in character. In 1877 the Chinese moved westward on the nearest of Yakoob Beg's posts, which surrendered after a poor defence. Deserters were well received by the Chinese as they advanced, and after several victories the fame of their clemency to the inhabitants spread abroad. This was a new feature in Chinese warfare, for out of policy they treated the people well, and furnished those who belonged to the western cities with money to take them home. Yakoob Beg here made the mistake of trying to shut these people's mouths by murdering them. But instead of preventing the spread of Chinese prestige, this wanton proceeding had the effect of enhancing Chinese reputation and of lowering his own by contrast.

A series of defeats and a crumbling away of his power decided the Bedaulat to put his fate to the touch. He poured out two cups of tea, and in one placed poison. He then went into another room, and ordered a servant to bring him one of the two cups. He drank the tea brought—and died.

The after history of Kashgaria does not present any points of particular interest, beyond the main one which concerns the re-establishment of Chinese dominion. Yakoob Beg's sons quarrelled among themselves and reduced their power of resistance against the Chinese. Yakoob Beg's army failed them time after time, as they failed the army, for they were not made of the same stuff as their father. The Chinese army gained an unbroken series of successes, and finally entered Kashgar in the winter of 1877 without firing a shot. It is interesting to note that great numbers of Mahomedan families, fearing massacre at the hands of the Chinese, fled over the passes into Russian Turk-estan. The month being December and the temperature zero, many perished by the way but all who

succeeded in crossing the border were saved by the admirable arrangements made for their relief by the Russians. The flight of these unfortunate people, however, was quite unnecessary, for the Chinese forbore to wreak vengeance, and their restraint then doubtless has had much to do with the peaceful and undisturbed position they have enjoyed in Turkestan ever since.